



31

**LIBRARY**  
OF THE  
**THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,**  
AT  
**PRINCETON, N. J.**

DONATION OF  
**SAMUEL AGNEW,**

OF PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Letter

81-3

51

May 22 8 1861.

No. ....

Case, Division

Shelf, Sec

Book, No

SCB  
10821

See Brown's Register of Education  
May 1855 - No. 2248.

for information as below

"Suppressed by the Wesleyan  
Conference." 

---













# ECCLESIASTICAL CLAIMS

INVESTIGATED,

AND THE

LIBERTY OF THE PULPIT

DEFENDED;

IN FIVE ESSAYS,

ON

1. THE UNINTERRUPTED SUCCESSION ;—
2. ORDINATION ;—
3. THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWERS OF THE CLERGY ;—
4. LEARNING ;—
5. MINISTERIAL QUALIFICATIONS.

---

---

By DANIEL ISAAC.

---

---

---

---

“Thou art a very ass ; thou art mad ; thou art courageous ;—nay, thou art impudent ! By my troth, I think he is mad ; he careth for nobody !”

BISHOP AYLMER.

“I speak as unto wise men ; judge ye what I say.”

APOSTLE PAUL.

---

---

EDINBURGH:

*Printed by C. Stewart, Printer to the University ;*

SOLD BY GUTHRIE AND TAIT, EDINBURGH ; J. NICHOLS, LEEDS ;  
T. BLANSHARD, 14, CITY-ROAD, LONDON, AND ALL  
OTHER BOOKSELLERS.

---

1815.





---

THE Author turned his attention to the subjects discussed in the following Essays soon after the failure of Lord Sidmouth's Bill. He had hoped, from the signal defeat which bigotry and intolerance suffered on that memorable occasion, that religious liberty would not have been soon again assailed; how great then was his surprise to find, that, almost immediately, a new interpretation was given to the Act of Toleration, which reduced it nearly to a cypher. The most singular circumstance was, that every court of quarter sessions in the kingdom, with one or two exceptions, viewed the act in a new light *all at once*; in consequence of which, all applications for licences, upon the old terms, were rejected. It appeared very wonderful, that the new interpretation, if the true one, should have eluded the sagacity of magistrates and lawyers for one hundred and twenty years; and that, after the lapse of so long a period,



they should be instantaneously illuminated with the knowledge of the truth, as if by immediate inspiration. But this mystery was explained when it transpired, that a *circular* had been sent to every court of quarter sessions, instructing the justices in the new doctrines. Compare this under-hand work with public professions about liberality, the rights of conscience, &c. and some illustrious characters will be illustrated. It was about the same time too, that our places of worship were taxed, a sacrilege never before practised in the world, by Heathens, Jews, or Mahometans.

These various attempts at persecution, filled the Author with indignation, and gave birth to the present work. Some people will perhaps think, that the new Toleration Act has rendered this little book unnecessary; the writer, however, is of a different opinion, and will proceed to detail his reasons for it.

Acts of Parliament are of very little consequence, if not supported by public opinion. When the sense of the nation is opposed to them, they will soon grow obsolete, or be repealed. This remark applies particularly to the Act in question, because it is framed solely on the professed principle of *expediency*. The preamble states, “Whereas it is

*expedient*," &c. But should the public opinion on the subject of religious liberty change, this expediency will no longer exist; it may then be judged expedient to repeal the Act of Toleration, and revive the Act of Uniformity.

It is remarkable, that though the opinions of senators, lawyers, and divines, may be cited in abundance, in favour of religious liberty, yet there is no assertion of *the rights of conscience* either in the old or new Act of Toleration. They both go on the ground of expediency. At the time the old Act was passed, William and Mary were not very firmly seated on the throne. The Catholics were powerful, and it was thought that the Nonconformists might have united with them, and overturned the infant government, had the old persecuting measures been pursued; it was therefore judged expedient, "to grant *some* ease to scrupulous consciences." In the next reign it was deemed expedient to resume the glorious work of persecution; and the *Schism Bill* was passed, which took the children of dissenters from their parents, and put them under the care of churchmen, that they might be educated in the principles of the establishment. A more inhuman act than this, the ingenuity of cruelty could not perhaps devise; but heaven in judgment took

away the priest-ridden Queen, the very day this iniquitous Act was to have taken place.

How long the present expediency will exist, it is impossible to say. One thing however is certain, that so long as the laws do not recognise the rights of conscience, we have no security for the permanency of our religious liberties, but in the public opinion. It is therefore of the utmost importance to support and perpetuate those liberal sentiments, which have been so long, and so generally, entertained in this nation.

It is the more necessary to call the attention of the public to the subjects discussed in the following pages, on account of the uncommon pains which have been taken of late years, to revive a spirit of bigotry and intolerance. The secret history of Lord Sidmouth's bill would be a most curious document. A part of it was published in the Literary Panorama, for July 1811 : “ It consists with our knowledge, that *towards ten years ago*, at a meeting of three, or four, or more, of the reverend the bishops (whether held for the purpose, we do not recollect), the subject of sectaries and their increase engaged the conversation. We believe that *minutes of their Lordships' opinions, or suggestions, were recorded*. This bill, though

called Lord Simouth's, we hazard little in affirming, is not his Lordship's composition. The skeleton of it, we presume, may be dated *eight or ten years ago*: and the finishing of it is by conjecture ascribed to a PRELATE, whose grammar and greek have lately received rough usage from sectarian commentators." When it is considered that Lord Sidmouth's bill, had it passed, would have nearly annihilated our religious liberties, this conduct of the bishops looks very much like a conspiracy against them.

But how happened it that eight or ten years elapsed before the bill was brought into parliament? To this question we are not furnished with an answer. The following fact, however, is deserving of notice. Previous to the formation of this plot, it was only occasionally that a book was printed, or a sermon preached, against the sectaries; but ever since, both the press and pulpit have been constantly bewailing the miseries of Methodism and the dangers of the Church. The alarm which has been sounding so long in Zion, has at last terrified some weak minds. By perpetually hearing frightful stories, some people are filled with dread. Tell a child about hobgoblins, and it will soon imagine it sees them: If you want to drive a man mad, confine him among madmen.

The conduct of high churchmen for some years past, has had very much the appearance of a systematic plan, to render all classes of dissenters odious to the nation, and prepare the way for an abridgement of their religious privileges. In numbers of pulpits the many-headed monster, *Methodism*, which comprises all the sectaries, has been manfully encountered by the doughty champions of the church; but though it has been roughly handled, and often triumphed over as an expiring foe, yet, like the beast in the Revelations, its deadly wound has healed again, its enemies have been dismayed, and the ominous cry has rung through the country—"Its progress must be stopped! Something must be done! The Church is in danger!" Prelates have made many a furious *charge* at it; pamphleteers have been employed to pelt it with dirt, and make it look hideous and frightful; and nearly the whole corps of reviewers have been pressed into the service of our aged and venerable mother, to protect her from injury, and excite public indignation against the terrible enemy which threatens her destruction.

Though innumerable visitation-sermons, pamphlets, and books have been published against Methodism within the period alluded to, yet the dissenters have seldom written a line in defence of their opinions,



practices, and liberties. They were ignorant of the Episcopal plot; and the works of their adversaries were either contemptible for their ignorance and dulness, or ridiculous for their impotent malice and absurdity. Take a specimen: A “Christian Advocate” at Cambridge wrote against the Methodists, and was incautious enough to confess, that he did not understand their principles. Another divine endeavoured to awaken the sensibility, and rouse to action the torpid powers of the Archbishop of Canterbury, by predicting his Grace’s martyrdom, if something were not speedily done to check the progress of fanaticism. And a *canting fellow* from a *learned* criticism on Ephesians vi. 11, shrewdly insinuated that the devil is a Methodist and the father of the sect, and loudly called upon his clerical brethren to “put on the whole armour of God, that they might be able to stand against the *methodism* of the devil.”

From such representations as these, many people, who can swallow any thing spoken by a priest, find it difficult to believe, that these arch-heretics belong to the human species. A friend of the author’s was some years ago, at an inn in Stamford, where the company were conversing about the Methodists. While some were describing the extravagances of

the sect, he observed one man to listen to the discourse with apparent astonishment: his curiosity was at last excited to such a pitch that he could hold in no longer, but enquired with great eagerness, "Pray what sort of *things* are they; for I do not know that I ever saw one of them in my life!" The reader may judge of his surprise, when he learned, that these *monstrous things* were two-legged animals like himself.

Though so much pains had been taken to prepare the public mind for it, it was still a nice and critical affair to introduce a bill into Parliament. For after all that had been said about the enthusiasm, fanaticism, heresy, schism, and jacobinism of the sects; after all the dreadful alarms that they had polluted the altar, and endangered the throne; after all the vehement demands, that, like troublesome "vermin, they must all be caught, killed, and cracked," or the Archbishop and his tribe would be martyred; after all the mighty pother from books and sermons, from newspapers, magazines, and reviews;—it was still doubtful, whether any measure of restriction would be carried. The subject was announced with the utmost caution; the Act of Toleration and dissenting ministers were panegyrised; and nothing more was intended than to promote the respectabili-



ty of the dissenting body, by laying under restraint a few hot-headed ignoramuses, who would not submit to the regulations of any religious community. Generous-hearted souls !

The next difficulty was to find a suitable time for introducing the bill into the house. Two things stood in the way, or it would have been brought forward at an earlier period. *1st.* The King was known to be averse to it. *2dly.* Our public men had so much political business upon their hands, that they had no time, even had they been disposed, to turn their attention to methodism. At length the auspicious moment arrived ! His Majesty was just laid aside through indisposition ; and the Prince, though his acquiescence was doubted, had not been tried. Our affairs abroad, which for a long time had worn an aspect gloomy as methodism, had recently taken a favourable turn. The enemy had been beaten ; and the national exultation on the occasion, was raised to the highest pitch.

A visionary could not have dreamed, that an intoxicated people, singing with enthusiasm the song of victory, would be sober time enough to perceive all the bearings of the bill, and be capable of sufficient sympathy with the meditated victims of into-

lerance, to unite with them in crushing the demon of persecution at its birth.

But the greatest difficulty was to quiet the apprehensions of the dissenters. This required the most dextrous management. When so many writers had charged them with disaffection, and called so loudly and peremptorily on the government for some act of coercion or restriction ; and when it was so well known that some periodical publications were devoted to the work of vilifying their character, and holding them up to the public as suspicious and dangerous persons, it is truly astonishing that any of them could be deceived. To prevent alarm, however, the bill was introduced by a *layman*. His Lordship honoured the principal dissenting ministers with several interviews, bowed and scraped, and was all politeness. He assured them that he revered the rights of conscience, and the Act of Toleration which secured them ; that nothing was further from his intention than to abridge their religious privileges, &c. &c. Many were lulled to sleep ; but the utmost address was insufficient to remove the jealousy and allay the fears of a few timorous souls. When the bill was published, all delusion instantly vanished ; and the dupes of artifice, by their subsequent zeal, made ample atonement for their past credulity.

Many have accused the framers of this bill of ignorance, but this is unjust. However deficient it may be in the harmlessness of the dove, it certainly contains a pretty large portion of the wisdom of the serpent. But its pernicious influence on the interests of the dissenters is now so well known, that it is unnecessary to dwell upon it here.

One object of the bill, according to the Archbishop of Canterbury, was, “to secure a more respectable description of teachers to the dissenters than they have at present.” The dissenters must be under infinite obligations to the bishops for their benevolent intentions and indefatigable exertions ! Shameful ingrates ! that the thanks of the body have not been returned to their Lordships. The reader will take it for granted, as a matter of course, that no ignorant or immoral ministers are to be found in the establishment, or these episcopal gentlemen would lie open to the imputation of being more concerned for the respectability of the conventicle than the church. The clergy are all grown as meagre and squalid as Pharaoh’s lean kine, by mortifying the flesh with watchings and fastings, prayers and penances. They are never seen at balls, assemblies, or theatres, dancing attendance on the ladies ; nor hunting, shooting, racing, or drinking with *bons vivants*. It is much

to be regretted, therefore, that dissenting ministers, who are notoriously guilty of these practices, and are scarcely ever to be found in their studies, should so obstinately resist this laudable attempt to reform them, by their wise, pious, and virtuous neighbours !

The most puzzling part of his Grace's speech, is, where he disclaims the character of a prophet, and yet predicts a period *when the church of England shall be no more*. How is this ! Is it necessary, in order to prolong her existence, that the Act of Toleration should be better *explained*, and dissenting teachers *improved* !—An actor spoils all when he loses his mask.

When the fate of the bill was perceived, all parties were ready to disown it; like a company of unlucky boys detected in a mischievous action, every one eagerly cried out, “ It was not me ! ” The Archbishop of Canterbury “ was sure, that so long as the church of England should endure, she would not disturb the dissenters.” But if his Grace be really a warm advocate for religious liberty, and be quite sure that the church of England is grown as harmless and innocent as a lamb, how happened it that neither himself, nor any of his right reverend brethren, uttered a single word upon these subjects, till they saw

the bill was lost ! When this ugly brat, which was begotten, nursed, and brought up by the bishops, appeared in public, the dissenters seized and strangled it ; and its unnatural parents, when they saw that all attempts to save its life were fruitless, confessed that it ought to die.

All the inferior clergy have cause to dread the suppression of methodism. Preaching against the sectaries has for some years been the high road to preferment. A young man who wishes to better his situation, has only to obtain an appointment to preach before his superiors, and to improve the opportunity by a violent philippic against the dissenters, and he is sure to gain his object. How many now enjoy fat benefices and bishoprics as the reward of their zeal against the enemies of our apostolic establishment. No other qualifications are necessary to rise to distinction than an acquaintance with a few cant phrases, and a good pair of lungs. For instance, to compose an excellent visitation sermon, take a few rattling words for your materials, such as schismatics, atheists, rebels, traitors, miscreants, monsters, fanatics, enthusiasts, hypocrites, apostolic church, excellent establishment, holy priesthood, sacred order, pious clergy, impiety, blasphemy, damnation : “ Stir these together in a warm head, and after a very little



shaking bring them out, scum and all; distribute them into several periods, and your work is done\*.” Take this precious composition into the pulpit, bellow away with all your might before patrons, doctors, and bishops, and you have made your fortune.

It is a matter of vast importance, that the dissenters keep united. The late attack was upon the whole body; when this was perceived, all parties joined and defeated it at a single stroke. Should another attempt be made, it will most probably be made against *a single sect*, in the hope that the other sects will look on as uninterested spectators. But if the wolf of persecution be permitted to tear a single sheep, it is foolish to talk of the rest of the flock being in safety: he will not leave the fold while one remains alive. First divide and then destroy, has always been the policy of the prince of darkness; and he has generally taken his measures with so much caution and secrecy, that his object has not been perceived, till it was too late to defeat it. But after the late conspiracy against our religious liberties has been detected, exposed and crushed, if one party can be lulled to sleep while another is robbed of its most valuable privileges, and thus, in suc-

\* Bradbury.

cession, the ruin of all denominations be effected, posterity, instead of pitying their fate, will contemplate, with holy indignation, that criminal indifference to each others interests by which it was merited. The recently formed society for the protection of our religious liberties, is a laudable and necessary institution; it ought to be, and it is hoped will be, joined by every religious community, that the influence of all may be exerted in the defence of each, and then our privileges will be preserved inviolate.

Those who wish to stop the progress of Methodism by restriction or coercion, ought to know, from the experience of all ages, that persecution has never weakened a sect, but when it has been conducted upon the broad principle of extermination; and not always even then. During the three first centuries, the bush grew and flourished in the fire. After all the sufferings of the puritans under Elizabeth and the two succeeding princes, instead of their being suppressed or diminished, it turned out that more than half the nation had embraced their religious system. And though the nonconformists were treated with greater rigour than the puritans, their interest gained ground daily, and was sufficiently strong at the revolution, to turn the scale on the side



of liberty. In a word, persecution will defeat its own end, if it do not, to use a common and vulgar expression, *hang them all up together*; but those who are for using this summary method of extirpating heresy, ought to reflect, that Haman swung upon the gallows which he had erected for Mordecai.

The dissenters have hitherto prided themselves upon their loyalty and patriotism; and it is astonishing how few of them, in comparison of churchmen, have been convicted of disaffection to the government, or of any crimes against the peace and good order of society; yet they have often been charged with conspiring against both church and state. All this abuse has been patiently borne, under a persuasion that our pious, venerable, and much esteemed Sovereign knew the contrary, and did not love them the less on account of their nonconformity. His olfactory nerves were not so delicate as to smell jacobinism in every creed which differed from his own. His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, it is believed, entertains the liberal and enlightened sentiments of his august Father; and while he exercises the royal authority in the equal protection of all classes of his subjects, in the free enjoyment of their civil and religious rights, he will not find the dissenters behind the most bigotted churchmen, in affec-

tion to his person and zeal for his government. But were the abominable lies of a set of incendiaries to obtain credit, and were an abridgement of our religious liberties to be the consequence, they would, most probably, cause the very evil of which they so loudly complain; for it is no easy matter for a man to retain his loyalty when it is tried by a prison, a pillory, or a halter.

The practice of persecution by any church, is a serious objection to its title as apostolical. Chrysostom has a pertinent remark upon this subject: "Does the sheep, says he, ever persecute the wolf? No, but the wolf the sheep. So Cain persecuted Abel, not Abel Cain; so Ishmael persecuted Isaac, not Isaac Ishmael; so the Jews Christ, not Christ the Jews; so heretics the christians, not christians heretics."\* Dr Jortin observes, that "to banish, imprison, plunder, starve, hang, and burn men for religion, is not the gospel of Christ; it is the gospel of the devil. Where persecution begins, christianity ends. Christ never used any thing that looked like force or violence, except once; and that was to drive bad men out of the temple, and not to drive them in."†

\* Quoted by Jewel, Apol. p. 543.

† Jortin's Sermon on Persecution.

The following pages are not committed to the press with a view to serve the interests of any one denomination of christians in particular, but to defend the practice of dissenting ministers and churches in general. Though the author has not replied to any single work which has appeared on the other side of the question, he presumes to think, that he has more than answered fifty publications in support of bigotry and intolerance.

And what is this D. Isaac who volunteers his services in behalf of the whole body of dissenters? The author has no wish to draw public attention from the book to himself; but as he is aware that readers are usually inquisitive after authors; and that, consequently, it will soon be known beyond the sphere of his acquaintance to what sect he belongs; he will anticipate all enquiries by an open avowal, because it will furnish him with an opportunity of explaining a point, which otherwise might lead some people into mistake. Know then, that this D. Isaac, is an itinerant preacher in the Wesleyan connexion. “A Methodist preacher!” exclaims one; and another, “Why we always thought that Methodists were stanch churchmen!” This is a point to be explained. A peculiar excellence in the constitution of Methodism is this: People are not required to withdraw

from other religious communities when they become members of the Methodist societies: A churchman may remain a churchman still, and a dissenter a dissenter still. Mr Wesley was a churchman. Nine tenths of those who joined his societies had made no previous profession of religion at all. He *advised* them to go to church; and most of them complied. As the greater part of his people thus became churchmen, the preachers, who were selected from among them, were generally well affected towards the establishment, and exhorted their hearers to attend the ministry of the regular clergy.

This was the state of things for some time. In point of fact the greater part of both preachers and people were churchmen; but this was owing to the circumstances stated above, and not to any law of the connexion requiring the members to profess churchism: Liberty was all along allowed; and a few from the first dissented from the establishment.

It is also a fact, that of late years, many of the Methodists have become dissenters; and it is doubtful with the author, whether it be proper *now* to designate them generally as churchmen. The principal cause of this increasing secession from the church

is to be found in the conduct of the clergy. They have preached away so lustily against Methodism, that though the people crouched and fawned for some time, like spaniels under the lash, they were obliged at last to take to their heels and run away.

The author is a dissenter in principle. He is sensible, however, that many sentiments contained in his book, have no place in the creed of a respectable number of his brethren ; and as some of them have written him on the subject, and expostulated with him on the impropriety of publishing opinions which are not generally held by the religious body to which he belongs, under an idea that the public might impute his peculiar notions to all the preachers, and thus include them in the censure, if censure be incurred, which is due only to himself,—he wishes it to be distinctly understood, that in publishing this piece he is not the organ of his brethren in the ministry, and that the praise or blame which may be awarded, belongs to himself alone.

If it should be objected, that the liberty contended for in the following pages is not enjoyed by the Methodist societies, the author thinks the objector is mistaken. The present members were perfectly at



liberty in joining the societies, and they have the same liberty to withdraw whenever they think proper. They are the guardians of orthodoxy ; for if they are of opinion that their ministers preach false doctrines, live wicked lives, or neglect discipline, they have a power of dismissing them. With respect to the choice of ministers, the members prefer the itinerant plan, as they find it more edifying to have a succession of preachers, than to be restricted to the labours of an individual for life. Upon this plan it is impossible for the people to have a liberty of choice as to particular preachers, because two or more societies might wish to have the same man ; they therefore chuse to receive such as are appointed by Conference, rather than be confined to a single stated minister.

The liberty pleaded for in these sheets, is not a liberty in behalf of individuals to infringe upon the rights of societies. Every member of a society ought to conform to its regulations, or quietly withdraw. Imposition is more hateful in individuals than in communities, as it is more unreasonable for a hundred to yield to one, than for one to yield to a hundred. This is so generally admitted, that factious persons seldom forget to plead, that they are acting in behalf

of *the people*, and that their wishes are the wishes of *the people*.\*

When it is asserted, that every man has a right to be of what religion he pleases, it is not meant that he has this right independent of God, but merely independent of his fellow creatures. Every man is responsible to God, and is obliged in conscience to be guided by his word in religious matters. If he takes up with a false religion, he will have to suffer the consequences of it in another world ; but that is surely enough, without his being subjected to pains and penalties in this. He does not sin against man by adopting an erroneous creed, and worshiping with

\* A few turbulent spirits, some years ago, agitated the Methodist societies. The burden of their song was, that the preachers were tyrants, and the people suffering the most grievous oppressions ; that nothing could save the connexion but a new constitution, founded upon, what they termed, more liberal principles, &c. The preachers, conscious of their own integrity, and of the attachment of the members in general to the old plan, refused to concede what was so peremptorily demanded. *The friends of the people*, as they styled themselves, separated ; formed their new constitution ; and invited the people to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God. It turned out that about one in eighteen joined the new connexion ; so that *one* was *the people*, and the other *seventeen* were *nothing at all* ! History furnishes innumerable examples of this kind. The one had a right to withdraw, if he felt dissatisfied ; but he had no right to attempt the imposition of his new yoke upon the necks of his brethren.



ridiculous rites and ceremonies; but against his Maker, and he ought to be left to the judgment of God.

The strictures on the clergy in this little book are not intended to apply to the moderate party,—for with some of them the author is acquainted, and the whole of them he highly respects;—but to the high-flyers, who are for driving to the devil, in a chariot of fire, all who refuse subjection to their spiritual authority. Some readers will perhaps blame the author for not writing with perfect calmness and gravity. The fact is, he has a great dislike to writing controversy; and as the subject was unpleasant, it may possibly have had an unhappy influence upon his temper. In walking through a village, his pleasing meditations on rural scenery, have sometimes been interrupted by the barking of little insignificant curs; while the noisy animals have kept at a respectful distance, he has walked on, regardless of their anger; but when they have grown bolder and attempted to bite, he has felt indignant and kicked them away. Bigots have been long barking, and he took no notice of them; but of late they have attempted to bite; it became necessary to chastise their folly, but it was neither easy nor necessary to do this with much *sweetness of temper*. Persecution

is a furious, impudent fiend, which cannot be driven away with a few fine, soft words. The language of these sheets, however, is courtly, when compared with the anti-methodistical publications of the day. Till the enemies of the sectaries learn better manners, they must submit to a little rough usage:—  
 “ A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back.”

---

Since these sheets were ready for the press, the author has seen a well written pamphlet by Mr Hare, on “ The exclusive claims of Episcopal Ordination examined and rejected.” As the subjects discussed in both works are in some particulars the same, the reader will not be surprised to find that both writers have, in some instances, employed the same arguments. The points of resemblance, however, are not very numerous; and where the arguments happen to be the same, they are set in different lights; the author, therefore, did not deem it necessary to make any alterations. He has several quotations from the Homilies, and one from Dr Doddridge, which adorn Mr H’s pages; but these

are so excellent, that he could not find in his heart to draw his pen through them. He has not borrowed a single sentiment from Mr H's performance, nor altered a single line since reading it. He is sensible that he might have improved his work by adopting some of Mr H's masterly reasonings; but he is too honest and too idle to do it.



# ESSAY I.

## ON THE UNINTERRUPTED SUCCESSION.

---

**M**OST Episcopalians hold, that Jesus Christ imparted to the Apostles the gift of the Holy Ghost for the office and work of the ministry; and that they conferred this gift, by the rite of ordination, upon their coadjutors and immediate successors, from whom have descended to the present time, a regular succession of episcopally ordained, and divinely inspired ministers.

All who are included in this succession are deemed *regular* clergymen, who are fully qualified for the office of spiritual guides, and whose labours are accompanied with the divine blessing. On the other hand, it is stiffly maintained, that those ministers who cannot trace their spiritual descent through this episcopal line, are unauthorised and unaccredited teachers, intruders into the sacred ministry, vain pretenders to inspiration, and deceivers of the people, merely because they have not received the Holy Spirit into their noddles, like a spark of electric fire through the finger ends of a right reverend prelate.

The scheme of high churchmen, for the sake of consistency, should be carried a little farther. It should be extended to *family* worship. The succession is of importance only as it is the channel through which the Spirit of God is supposed to be conveyed to his ministers; and the influence of the Holy Ghost, in divine worship, is of importance only on the presumption that no religious service can be of any benefit without it. But should you allow the Holy Spirit to assist a layman in teaching his family, how can you deny divine assistance to the same person when holding forth in the conventicle? To make the succession of any value, it ought to be shewn, that no person can read the scriptures, pray, or teach, to edification, in his family, without first receiving the episcopal benediction; and then every householder must either be ordained a priest himself, or keep one under his roof, or not suffer any religious service to be performed in his house.

But further, suppose a few neighbours or relations should be present at family worship, will the Holy Spirit be startled at the appearance of these strangers and take his flight? or will he continue his aid, that all present may receive a blessing? The new Act of Toleration permits twenty strangers to be present at family worship;\* and I have never heard that the clergy object to this as unlawful or irregular. A master of a family then may instruct

\* More than twenty may be present at a revel, and there is nothing the matter; but moral instruction, and devotion, is, with many people, a greater sin than drunkenness.

and pray with his wife, eight children, six servants, and twenty others, without committing a church-sin, though here is a congregation of thirty-five persons; which is more than assemble in many parish churches for divine service. Here the Spirit has free course. It would require a profound casuist to shew, that though he may do all this legally and profitably, yet it would be sinful in him to hold a meeting with the same persons in another house, or with thirty-five other persons in his own house. The Bramins taught, according to Arrian, that no *private* sacrifice would be acceptable to the gods, if not presented by one of the sacred order; and if the succession be a matter of any consequence, the private worship of christians should be dispatched to heaven by an episcopal priest.

It deserves to be noticed too, that public instruction may be given by *writing* as well as by *preaching*. Is it not to the full as wicked in a layman to address us from the press, as from the pulpit? Shall we then anathematise the theological writings of Locke, Lyttleton, West, Addison, &c., merely because the authors were not in holy orders? No advocate for the succession, I presume, will carry matters quite so far as this. And yet it must be extremely absurd to permit the laity to write on the subject of religion, but forbid them to speak upon it. He must be a subtle jesuit who can prove, that a layman may print a discourse which will edify all his readers; but should he preach it, it will poison all his hearers. Is the same sermon, as it comes from the pen, the



savour of life unto life; but as it comes from the tongue, the savour of death unto death !!!

Another little circumstance should not be omitted here. It is well known that laymen, and even *lay-women*, have sometimes composed the discourses which the clergy preach. As the authors do not belong to the sacred order, it may be doubtful whether such productions can profit a congregation of the faithful; but the holy orators may possibly possess the art of putting spirit and life into these carnal compositions !

Once more, when it is affirmed that episcopalians only, have a right to teach religion, it is not intended, we may hope, that other people have no right to *talk* about it. But how shall we draw the line betwixt conversation and preaching? To talk to one or two persons about their souls may possibly not be thought an invasion of the priest's office. But how far may the layman venture? may he converse with five, ten, twenty, or a hundred people at once, without transgressing the law of holy orders? One would hope that a discourse from which one or two might receive profit, could do no harm to fifty or a hundred. In some parts of the east, according to Dr Buchanan, the preaching of the priest is a sort of religious conversation carried on between him and the people. He asks questions, and they return answers. If it should be said that the laity may talk about religion any where but in a place of worship,—it may be demanded, and why not there



too? Can any place be too sacred for religious improvement? If a layman be permitted to open his mouth upon so sacred a subject, I am afraid it will be difficult to prove that he has not as much right to instruct a thousand people as two or three. Philip is said to have preached to the eunuch; but this preaching was nothing more than an instructive conversation. Acts, viii. 30. &c.

“No bishop, no church” is a favourite saying with the advocates for the succession. If there be any truth in this saying, it is fatal to the sentiment which has given it birth. “We find bishops,” says Stillingfleet, “discontinued for a long time in the greatest churches. For if there be no church without a bishop, where was the church of Rome, when, from the martyrdom of Fabian, and the banishment of Lucius, the church was governed only by the clergy? So the church of Carthage, when Cyprian was banished; the church of the east, when Miletius of Antioch, Eusebius, Samosatenus, Pelagius of Laodicea, and the rest of the orthodox bishops were banished for ten years space, and Flavianus and Diodorus, two presbyters, ruled the church of Antioch the mean while. The church of Carthage was twenty-four years without a bishop, in the time of Hunneric, king of the Vandals; and when it was offered them that they might have a bishop,” they refused to accept of him.\*

\* Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*, Ch. vii. p. 376.

The succession cannot be supported without admitting the church of Rome to be a true church, and her priests the ministers of Christ. But as the papists are not polite enough to return the compliment to the church of England and her clergy, many weak and timorous persons, in order to be on the safe side, embrace popery. What bishop Burnet says of James II. is worth transcribing: it shews how easy it is to convert a high churchman to the catholic faith. “ He gave me this account of his changing his religion. When he escaped out of the hands of the earl of Northumberland, who had the charge of his education trusted to him by the parliament, and had used him with great respect, all due care was taken, as soon as he got beyond sea, to form him to a strict adherence to the church of England. Among other things, *much was said of the authority of the church, and of the tradition from the apostles in support of episcopacy.* So that when he came to observe that there was more reason to submit to the *catholic church* than to *one particular church*, and that other traditions might be taken on her word, as well as episcopacy was received among us, he thought this step was not great, but that it was very reasonable to go over to the church of Rome. And Dr Steward having taught him to believe a real but unconceivable presence of Christ in the sacrament, he thought this went more than half way to transubstantiation \*.”

\* History of his own Times. Vol. I. p. 275, 276.

A successionist maintains that the ministrations of others are invalid, from whence it follows, that those whom they baptize are not christians. Archbishop Secker was baptized by a dissenting minister, who had not episcopal ordination, his grace therefore was not a christian, and all his ministrations, of course, were of none effect. Now, it is a remarkable fact, and deserving of special notice by bigots, that Secker baptized the King, and most of the Royal Family\*, it will follow, from this high-church logic, that they were not made christians. I should be glad to know what sort of a body the church of England was, when its spiritual and political heads were both infidel? The apostle informs us that "from the head the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted;" which figure, if we may apply it to this case, will prove that the church was infidel from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot.

If it be true that the Holy Ghost is solely at the disposal of the bishops, is tied to the succession, and has no possible way of access to a minister but through the medium of episcopal hands; it must follow, since the success of the ministry depends upon the divine blessing, that it is absolutely necessary, not only that priests should be episcopally ordained, but that *their people* should be able to trace their spiritual descent from some apostle. Every man must be damned, according to this prelatical divinity, who is not under the guidance of a minister included in the

\* Eclectic Review, Vol. vi. p. 568.

succession. As the laity are so deeply interested in this affair, they ought to be furnished with faithful copies of all the orders received by the succession of priests, who have transmitted the Holy Ghost from an apostle down to their present pastor. Without this they can be at no certainty respecting their salvation. It can avail them nothing to believe the divinity of the scriptures, repeat an orthodox creed, worship with a most excellent liturgy, receive the sacraments with the profoundest reverence, practise christian morality with the greatest strictness, and rejoice in the hope of heavenly bliss with the most rapturous delight,—if their parson be not in the succession, they will soon be in hell. This point, therefore, must be settled first of all; and it would be folly to enter on a religious course before the succession is scrupulously traced, and clearly made out.

No clergyman, however, has had the goodness to favour his flock with this famous history. Not one in fifty of the people know who ordained their priest, and not one in a thousand know who consecrated the bishop\*.

\* “No man ever did to this day,” says Mr. Baxter, “demonstrate such a succession, for the proof of his ministry; nor can all our importunity prevail with papists to give us such a proof. It is a thing impossible for any man now alive, to prove the regular ordination of all his predecessors to the apostles’ days, yea or any ordination at all. How can you tell that he that ordained you, did not counterfeit himself to be ordained? or, at least, that he was not ordained by an unordained man? or that his predecessors were not so? It is a mere impossibility for us to know any such thing; we have no evidence to prove it.”

It is a singular circumstance, that churchmen should make the validity of their ministrations to depend upon the succession, when not one of them pretends to trace it; but all agree to make confident assertions supply the place of proof. This is the more remarkable, as they are liberal enough in the production of historical evidence, to support matters of minor importance. When, for instance, the dispute relates to some trivial ceremonies, a folio is soon filled with citations from the primitive fathers.

In disputing with the Methodists, the clergy very often call for a *miracle*, in proof of their inspiration. A Methodist pleads that he received the Spirit immediately from God, in answer to prayer; a churchman, that he received the Spirit from the bishop, by the imposition of hands. Now, why should we be credulous enough to be satisfied with a mere *ipse dixit*, in one case, and require even a miracle to overcome our scepticism in the other? Is not God both as able and as willing to give the Holy Ghost,

“ If the foresaid uninterrupted succession be necessary to the being of our ministry, or churches, or ordinances, then it is incumbent on all that will prove the truth of their ministry, churches, or ordinances, to prove the said succession. But this is not true; for then none could prove any of them. Either it is meet that we be able to prove the truth of our ministry, churches, and administrations, or not. If not, then why do the adversaries call us to it? If yea, then no man among the churches in Europe, on their grounds, hath any proof; and therefore must not pretend to the ministry, churches, or ordinances; but we must all turn Seekers to-day, and infidels to-morrow.”  
Baxter’s Disputations, p. 169-175.



as a bishop? The Methodist, however, does not, like his opponents, desire his mere assertion to supply the place of evidence; he believes he can prove his inspiration without disturbing the order of nature; he appeals to the purity of his doctrine, the integrity of his character, and the success of his labours; he insists that these evidences are sufficient, without shewing signs from heaven; he is ready to dispute this point with his adversaries; and he will allow them to call him an enthusiast and a fanatic, when they have shewn that his ground is untenable. A miracle ought only to be demanded, when no other sufficient proof can be produced, and then the demand is reasonable. The churchman affirms, that no man is a true minister who is not included in the succession; the succession, therefore, must be proved to justify his ministry. But, strange to tell! he has no proof to offer. Upon his own principles, therefore, he must either work a miracle to supply the defect of historical evidence, or expose himself to a retort of the charge of enthusiasm and fanaticism, for pretending to have received the Spirit of God from a man, who, it is doubtful, never possessed it.

As the clergy do not chuse to give us the history of this succession, I have a right to assume that they cannot do it; but as so much stress is laid upon it, and as they take it for granted that they are all in it, I will shew that this famous succession cannot be proved, and that there is very strong presumptive evidence, that our episcopalians are all out of it.



Tertullian is quoted with triumph by the clergy, as though he had brought the succession down to the present generation of bishops. Speaking of the heretics, this holy father demands, "Let them shew us the original of their churches, and give us a catalogue of their bishops in an exact succession from first to last, whereby it may appear, that their first bishop had either some apostle, or some apostolical man, living in the time of the apostles, for his author or immediate predecessor. For thus it is that apostolical churches make their reckoning. The church of Smyrna counts up to Polycarp, ordained by St John; the church of Rome to Clemens, ordained by St Peter; and so all other churches in like manner exhibit their first bishops ordained by the apostles, by whom the apostolical seed was propagated and conveyed to others."\*

It will be proper to make two or three remarks on this celebrated passage.

I. It appears that in the second century, when this father flourished, there were many heretical bishops not included in the succession. Even in the apostolic age, there were false apostles and false teachers, and the church in all ages since, has complained of swarms of unauthorised and unaccredited ministers. Now, how can we know that our bishops are the lineal descendants of the apostles, and not rather derived from the heretics, unless they can

\* Tertul. de Prescript. c. 52.

“ give us a catalogue of their bishops, in an exact succession from first to last,” and shew us the apostle from whom they originate? For if it were necessary in the days of Tertullian, that a bishop, in order to prove his legitimacy, should make out an *exact catalogue* of all his predecessors, how much more necessary must it be *now*, when so many thousands have, since that time, intruded into the episcopal office.

II. Though we have Tertullian’s authority for it, that the heretical bishops were not in the succession; yet it was the custom of the church, when these heretics returned to her communion, to permit them to retain the rank of bishops without re-ordination. Thus the African and Roman churches received the donatist bishops, upon their repentance; and, without giving them new orders, permitted them to exercise their pastoral functions. Bingham has shewn this at large: “ Anisius, bishop of Thessalonica, with a council of his provincial bishops, agreed to receive those whom Bonosus, an heretical bishop of Macedonia, had ordained.—Liberius admitted the Macedonian bishops to communion, and allowed them to continue in their office, upon their subscription to the Nicene creed, and abjuration of their former heresy. The general council of Ephesus, made an order concerning the Massalian heretics, otherwise called *Euchites* and *Enthuasts*, that if any of their clergy would return to the church, and in writing, anathematise their former errors, they should continue in the same station they were in be-

fore. The council of Nice is thought\* to have made the like decree in favour of the Novatian clergy. And there is nothing more certain, than that the African fathers so treated the Donatist.†” When it is considered how many hundreds of heretical bishops; who were out of the succession, have in several ages been received into the church, and that these, by ordaining others, have perpetuated a race of prelates *in the church*, not lineally descended from the apostles; there is much room to fear, that the true succession is run out, and that the present bishops are the offspring of the spurious race of heretics.

But admitting there are still some legitimate descendants of the apostles, the odds are many against

\* There is no room for a moment's doubt upon this subject. The following is the canon: “As to those who call themselves *puritans*, if they come over to the catholic and apostolic church, the holy synod decrees, that *they who are ordained shall continue in the clergy*; having first professed in writing, that they will adhere to the decrees of the catholic church; that is, that they will communicate with those that have married a second time, and such as have lapsed under persecution, (who have had a time given, and a term fixed for their penance), so that they will in all things follow the doctrine of the catholic church. When none but they are found to be ordained in any city or village, *they shall all remain in the same order*; but if any come over where there is a bishop or priest of the catholic church, it is clear that the bishop of the church ought to retain his dignity; and he that had been called a bishop by the puritans, shall have the honour of a priest, unless the bishop think fit to impart to him the nominal honour [of a bishop]. Otherwise he shall provide for him the place of a village bishop, or priest; that so there may not be two bishops in one city.” Canon 8. See Clergyman's Vade-mecum, part ii, p. 49, 50.

† Bingham's Antiquities, b. iv, ch. 7, sect. 8.

our *English* bishops being of that number—they are so few in comparison of the immense multitudes which formerly belonged to the Romish church; and as there is no possible way of distinguishing the true from the false, but by giving the exact catalogue, the production of this curious document is absolutely necessary, in order to obtain any satisfaction respecting the apostolical origin of our prelates. But who can make out this catalogue of bishops, from the apostles down to the present day, without including a single heretic in it? I feel no hesitation in replying, No man living.

III. The succession was deemed important by Tertullian, not because the bishops communicated the Holy Ghost, for no one made such shocking pretensions till many centuries afterwards; but because, “by them the *apostolical doctrine* was propagated and conveyed to others.” The heretics, against whom this father wrote, esteemed some writings sacred, which were evidently spurious, and rejected others which the orthodox could prove to be sacred. Those churches which were planted by the apostles and their coadjutors, to whom the gospels and epistles were originally intrusted, were better qualified to judge what writings were truly apostolical, than churches which were founded but yesterday, by bishops who held no intercourse with the catholics. The apostolical origin of *churches*, was a matter of as much importance in this controversy, as the uninterrupted succession of bishops. “Let them shew us *the original of their churches*. The

*church* of Smyrna counts up to Polycarp, ordained by St John,—and all other *churches* exhibit their first bishops ordained by the apostles.” The church of England was not planted by an apostle, nor did an apostle ordain its first bishops.

Though the bishops in the primitive churches had the custody of the divine records, yet it is not to be supposed, that they were the only persons capable of preserving the sacred depositum inviolate. Tertulian was so far from thinking so, that in another place\* he speaks of the churches themselves as keeping the holy books. Bishop Stillingfleet’s remark upon this is to the point: “What he spoke before of the persons, (i. e. the bishops), he now speaks of the churches themselves planted by the apostles, which, by retaining the authentic epistles of the apostles sent to them, did thereby sufficiently *prescribe* to all, the novel opinions of the heretics. We see then, evidently, that it is the *doctrine* which they speak of as to succession, and the persons no further than as they are the conveyers of that doctrine. Either, then, it must be proved, that a succession of some persons in apostolical power, is necessary for the conveying of this doctrine to men, or no argument at all can be inferred from hence for their succeeding the apostles in their power, because they are said to convey the apostolical doctrine to succeeding ages.”†

\* De Prescript. advers. Heret. cap. 36.

† Stillingfleet’s Irenicum, pt. ii. ch. 6. p. 305.



IV. If it be still contended, that Tertullian is pleading for an uninterrupted succession of episcopally ordained ministers, as the only medium through which the Holy Ghost is conveyed to succeeding ages, it is sufficient to reply, that the authority of this father is fatal to the church of England. We have a right to demand, in his own words, of those churchmen who acknowledge his authority, “ Shew us the original of your church, and give us a catalogue of your bishops in an exact succession from first to last, whereby it may appear, that your first bishop had either some apostle, or some apostolical man, living in the time of the apostles, for his author or immediate predecessor. For thus it is, that apostolical churches make their reckoning.” But this they cannot do. There is no such catalogue in existence. “ Thus it is,” says the holy father, “ that apostolical churches make their reckoning.” But thus the church of England cannot make her reckoning: the inference is undeniable, that the church of England is not an apostolical church. The heretics, like our episcopalians, pretended that their churches were apostolical; but mere assertions passed for nothing with our orthodox father: Give us, says he, the *exact catalogue*!

But let us leave Tertullian, and proceed. There have been many impostors as well as heretics;—persons who have assumed the sacred office, and forged orders.\* These ordained multitudes in different

\* “ When I was young,” says Mr Baxter, “ I lived in a village



ages of the church ; they could not communicate to others what they had not received themselves ; it follows, that all the descendants of these religious cheats must be pronounced, in the words of the apostle, “sensual, not having the spirit.” Now, how can it be made appear that our modern prelates are not descended from these spiritual impostors?

It is worthy of enquiry, what will become of the *people* who are under the guidance of impostors or their successors? Must these simple souls be shut out of heaven for the tricks of their priests? If it be said, that, because they take them for true ministers, their ministrations are efficacious, though their orders are irregular ;—this is giving up the point, and making the benefit of their services to depend,

that had but about twenty houses ; and among these there were five that went out into the ministry. One was an old reader, whose original we could not reach : Another was his son, whose self-ordination was much suspected. The other three had letters of orders, two of them suspected to be drawn up and forged by him, and one that was suspected to ordain himself. One of them, or two, at last were proved to have counterfeit orders, when they had continued many years in the ministry. So that this is no rare thing.

“ Among so many temptations that in so many ages since the apostles’ days, have befallen so many men, as our predecessors in the ministry, or the bishops’ predecessors have been, it were a wonder if all of them should escape the snare. So that we have reason to take it for a thing improbable, that the succession hath not been interrupted. And we know that in several ages of the church, the prelates and priests have been so vile, that in reason we could expect no better, from men so vicious, than forgery and abuse.” Baxter’s Disputations, p. 170.

not upon the legality of their ordination, but upon the good opinion and pious disposition of the worshippers. It must be remarked here, that dissenters take their ministers to be true ministers; and if this be a mistake, is it not as pardonable in them as in churchmen?

There are insuperable obstacles in the way of tracing the episcopal succession. Our bishops pretend to be derived from the Roman catholics. But it has been shewn, that the succession has been interrupted in that church; for some time after the martyrdom of Fabian and banishment of Lucius, the orthodox were governed by the inferior clergy. It is much to be feared, that the succession was interrupted again in the person of Pelagius the first. The canons of the ancient church and of the church of England state, that no less than three bishops are necessary to make a bishop. But it is a well known fact that this pope was ordained by only *two* bishops and *one* presbyter. If it requires, therefore, the united powers of three bishops to inspire an episcopal brother with the Holy Ghost, and if the power of a presbyter be not equal to that of a bishop, it is a clear case that Pelagius was not a true bishop, and that, consequently, the succession has failed.

But supposing the succession of popes had not been interrupted, how do we know that their ordinations were all valid? It was seldom, if ever, the case that a pope ordained his successor, because the

canons forbade it.\* The greater part of the bishops who ordained the popes are perfectly unknown; though they ought not only to be known, but their spiritual descent from St. Peter proved; for if any of them were out of the succession, it is impossible they should put the popes into it. When it is considered by what base arts many obtained the pope-dom, and that not a few of them were ordained by reputed heretics and schismatics, it must be next to a miracle if the succession has not been interrupted. And as the exact catalogue cannot be given, a miracle to supply its place ought to be wrought, to induce a belief in any rational mind, that the chain has been preserved unbroken, and that our prelates are a part of St. Peter's spiritual progeny.

If the succession cannot be traced through the popes, it cannot be made out at all; because there is no regular succession of bishops from the Apostles to the present time, in any other church; and if there even were, it would still be impossible to shew

\* The apostolical constitutions decreed, canon 68, that "A bishop is not allowed to ordain [*for a successor*, as the following words clearly shew] whom he pleases, by conferring the episcopal dignity on a brother, son, or any other near relation. For it is not just that there should be *heirs* of the episcopal office, or that what belongs to God should be given according to the affections of men, nor the church be brought under the *laws of inheritance*. If any one do this, let the ordination be null, and let him be punished by suspension from communion." And the synod of Antioch ordained, canon 23, that "It is not lawful for a bishop to appoint his own successor, though he be at the point of death. If any thing of this sort be done, let such provision be null."

that they were all ordained by persons duly qualified to confer holy orders.

Another circumstance fatal to the episcopal succession, is, that in the primitive times presbyters often ordained persons to the ministry in general, and sometimes even ordained bishops; so that if a modern bishop could reckon up to some apostle, it is ten to one but when he came to trace through the three or four first centuries, he would find several *presbyterian links* in his chain, and even one of these would spoil the whole.

Bishop Stillingfleet, has proved, from Jerom and the Canonists, that “ In the primitive church the presbyters all acted in common for the welfare of the church, and either did, or might, ordain others, to the same authority with themselves; because the intrinsical power of order is equally in them, and in those who were after appointed governors over presbyters. And the collation of orders doth come from the power of order, and not merely from the power of jurisdiction. It being likewise fully acknowledged by the schoolmen, that bishops are not superior above presbyters as to the power of order\*.” He informs us, in another place, that “ In the year 452, it appears by Leo, in his epistle to Rusticus Narbonensis, that some presbyters took upon them to ordain as bishops; about which he was consulted by Rusticus what was to be done in that case with

\* Irenicum, chap. vi. p. 275.

those so ordained." Leo replied, " Those clergymen who were ordained by such as took upon them the office of bishops, in churches belonging to proper bishops, if the ordination were performed by the consent of the bishops, it may be looked on as valid, and those presbyters remain in their office in the church." So that by the consent, *ex post facto*, of the true bishops, those presbyters, thus ordained, were looked on as lawful presbyters, which could not be, unless their ordainers had an intrinsical power of ordination, which was only restrained by the laws of the church, for if they have no power of ordination, it is impossible they should confer any thing by their ordination. If to this it be answered, that the validity of their ordination did depend upon the consent of the bishops, and that presbyters may ordain, if delegated thereto by bishops, as Paulinus might ordain on that account at Antioch ; it is easily answered, that this very power of doing it by delegation, doth imply an intrinsical power in themselves of doing it. For if presbyters be forbidden ordaining others by Scripture, then they can neither do it in their own persons, nor by delegation from others. And if presbyters have power of conferring nothing by their ordination, how can an *after* consent of bishops make that act of theirs valid, for conferring right and power by it?" \*

The Synod of Ancyra decreed, canon 13.---" It is not lawful for *chorepiscopi* to ordain presbyters or

\* Irenicum, chap. vii. p. 380, 381.



deacons; nor for the presbyters of the city, in another parish, without the bishop's letter." This shews that city presbyters might ordain any where, with the bishop's licence; and in their own parish, perhaps, without it.

Having shewn that anciently it was not disputed but that presbyters had a right to ordain, it will be proper to give some examples of their making bishops. But before I do this, I wish to make one observation. If the validity of presbyterian ordination be admitted, the dissenters cannot be out of the succession, suppose the clergy be in it. Wesley and Whitfield, the founders of two considerable sects, were both presbyters of the church of England; the founders of most of the other sects were either puritan or nonconformist clergymen who left the establishment; and among them all the succession has been perpetuated.

The presbyters of the church of Alexandria, according to Jerom, exercised the privilege of ordaining their own bishops, from the death of the evangelist Mark to the time of Dionysius, a period of near two hundred years. Eutychius, patriarch of Alexandria, expressly affirms, "That the twelve presbyters, constituted by Mark, upon the vacancy of the see, did chuse out of their number one to be head over the rest, and the other eleven did lay their hands upon him, and blessed him, and made him patriarch." \*

\* Stillingfleet's Iren. chap. vi. p. 273, 274.



It is scarcely credible that these presbyters would have had the temerity to make a bishop, had they not received instructions to that effect from Mark, previous to his decease. The Apostle John is supposed to have lived about thirty-five years after the death of this evangelist. Mr Baxter makes a pertinent observation upon this case: "Now I would leave it," says he, "to any man's impartial consideration, whether it be credible that the holy Apostles, and all the evangelists or assistants of them, then alive, would have suffered this innovation and corruption in the church, without a plain disowning it and reproving it? Would they silently see their newly established order violated in their own days, and not so much as tell the churches of the sin and danger? Or, if they had indeed done this, would none regard it, nor remember it, so much as to resist the sin? These things are incredible." \*

Here then we have an example of presbyters making a bishop, in the days of the apostles, and in an orthodox church, to be the immediate successor of an inspired evangelist. As these presbyters had been for years under the pupilage of Mark, they acted most probably, in this instance, in obedience to his commands; for it cannot be supposed that he would neglect to give them full directions in an affair of such vast importance as the appointment of his successor. This example would no doubt be extensively influential; and the frequency of presbyterian ordination in the primitive churches must in-

\* Baxter's Disputat. p. 154.

volve the episcopal succession in inextricable difficulties.

If it were possible to trace the present race of bishops up to their originals, it would turn out, I believe, in most instances, that they are derived from presbyters. “If we believe Philostorgius,” says Stillingfleet, “the Gothic churches were planted and governed by presbyters for above seventy years. And great probability there is, that where churches were planted by presbyters, as the church of France by Andochius and Inignus, that afterwards, upon the increase of churches and presbyters to rule them, they did from among themselves chuse one to be as the bishop over them, as Photinus was at Lyons. For we nowhere read, in those first plantations of churches, that where there were presbyters already, they sent to other churches to derive episcopal ordination from them.” \*

There is very strong evidence that our English bishops, in particular, are derived from presbyters of the church of Scotland. From the time of their conversion in the year 263, to the coming of Palladius in the year 430, the Scotch were governed by presbyters (called *Culdees*) and monks. Bishops were never much in vogue with our northern neighbours. Austin revived their dying episcopacy; but it became extinct in about a century afterwards. “Mr Jones has undertaken to prove at large, that the ordination of our *English bishops* cannot be

\* Irenicum, chap. vii. p. 375.

traced up to the church of Rome as its original; that in the year 668, the successors of Austin, the monk who came over A. D. 596, being almost entirely extinct, by far the greatest part of the bishops were of Scottish ordination by Aidan and Finan, who came out of the Culdee monastery of Columbanus, and were no more than presbyters; though, when the princes of the northern nations were converted by them, they made them bishops; i. e. gave them authority over the clergy, and took other bishops from among their converts. So that, denying the validity of presbyterian ordination, shakes the foundation of the episcopal church of England.\*

If we try to trace the succession downwards, we are surrounded with difficulties, at the very beginning. It must first be proved that Peter visited Rome, and then that he acted as bishop there, which is no easy task. But when we have fairly seated him on the episcopal throne of the imperial city, I am afraid we must stop short.

The learned are not agreed who was his immediate successor. "Some," says Bingham, "reckon Linus first, then Anacletus, then Clemens; others begin with Clemens, and reckon him the first in order from St Peter."†

Stillingfleet observes, that the Romish succession "is as muddy as the Tyber itself. For here," says

\* Doddridge's Lect. on Div. Lect. 197.

† Antiquities, b. ii. ch. i. sect. iv.

he, "Tertullian, Ruffinus, and several others, place Clement next to Peter. Ireneus and Eusebius set Anacletus before him; Epiphanius and Optatus, both Anacletus and Cletus; Augustinus and Damasus, with others, make Anacletus, Cletus, and Linus, all to precede him. What way shall we find to extricate ourselves out of the labyrinth, so as to reconcile it with the certainty of the form of government in the apostles' times? Certainly if the line of succession fail us here, where we most need it, we have little cause to pin our faith upon it, as to the certainty of any particular form of church government settled in the apostles' times, which can be drawn from the help of the records of the primitive church, which must be first cleared of all *defectiveness, ambiguity, partiality, and confusion*, before the thing we enquire for, can be extracted out of them."\*

The same writer, remarks: "In none of the churches most spoken of, is the succession so clear as is necessary. For at Jerusalem, it seems somewhat strange, how fifteen bishops of the circumcision should be crowded into so narrow a room as they are, so that many of them could not have above two years to rule in the church. And it would bear an inquiry, where the seat of the bishops of Jerusalem was, from the time of the destruction of the city by Titus, (when the walls were laid even with the ground by Musonius), till the time of Adrian; for till that time, the succession of the bishops of the circumcision continues. For Antioch, it is far from

\* Iren. p. ii. ch. vi. p. 322.

being agreed, whether Evodius or Ignatius succeeded Peter or Paul, or the one Peter and the other Paul. At Alexandria, where the succession runs clearest, *the original of the power is imputed to the choice of presbyters, and to no divine institution.* But at Ephesus, the succession of bishops from Timothy, is pleaded with the greatest confidence, and the testimony brought for it is from Leontius, bishop of Magnesia, in the council of Chalcedon, who says, *from Timothy to this day, there hath been a succession of seven and twenty bishops, all of them ordained in Ephesus.*" Two members of the council proved, however, that several of the bishops of Ephesus were not ordained in that city; and my author goes on to remark upon it, that "if he were out in his allegation, no wonder if he were deceived in his tradition. If, then, the certainty of succession relies upon the credit of this Leontius, let them thank the council of Chalcedon, who have sufficiently blasted it, by determining the cause against him in the main evidence produced by him. So much to shew how far the clearest evidence for succession of bishops from apostolical times, is from being convincing to any rational man."\*

The truth of the matter appears to be this. When bishops lost the humble, unassuming spirit of their divine Master, and began to thirst for power and dominion in the christian world, they endeavoured to promote their carnal objects by spiritual pretences; as these were likely to have most weight with the

\* Iren. p. ii. ch. vi. p. 501—503.



credulous multitude. If, therefore, an apostle or evangelist had only visited the city where a bishop afterwards resided, or if a passable fiction to that effect could be invented, he was reckoned the first bishop of that church; because this would give respectability and authority to the successors of so eminent a servant of God. Thus Peter was made bishop of both Antioch and Rome, James of Jerusalem, Mark of Alexandria, Ananias of Damascus, Barnabas of Milan, Silas of Corinth, Timothy of Ephesus, Titus of Crete, Epaphroditus of Philippi, &c. &c. The bishops of Rome laid claim to Peter as their spiritual father, though it is doubted by many whether he ever saw Rome. The next step was to make him the chief or prince of the apostles, and then to make his successors the princes or lords of the universal church.

If this succession could be traced, its history would furnish many amusing anecdotes; but the number of astonishing miracles connected with it, are sufficient to excite the suspicion of the incredulous. Eusebius gives a very diverting account of the election of Fabian.\* When the people were assembled to chuse a bishop, they observed a dove to settle upon Fabian's head; this was taken for an emblem of the Holy Ghost, and they immediately and unanimously fixed upon him for their pastor. Whether this was a trick of Fabian to obtain a bishopric, or a story framed by priests to colour over some irregularity in the proceedings, it is difficult to say. Sup-

\* Lib. vi. ch. xxix.



pose a Methodist were to plead, as a proof of his call to the ministry, that a pigeon, or a goose, had settled upon his head, how would all the *regular* clergy exclaim against the enthusiasm and fanaticism of the preacher ! but when such a prodigy occurs at the election of an orthodox bishop, it is, no doubt, a special divine interposition !!

But supposing it were proved ever so clearly, that there has been an uninterrupted succession of episcopally ordained ministers in the church, and that our clergy are included in this succession, it is still easy to shew that *the course of the Spirit has been interrupted*, and this renders the outward succession of no value whatever. Suppose the charter of a nation's liberties were deposited in an iron chest, and an order of men appointed to have the custody of it ; if the charter by any means were lost, how ridiculous it would appear in these gentlemen, were they still to keep up their order by a ceremonious incorporation of new members to fill up the occurring vacancies, and to stand sentry in their pompous robes of office over the empty box.

According to the canons of the ancient church, there are many things which will nullify the ordination of a bishop ; such as diabolical possession, simony, heresy, immorality, &c. \* An ordination ought not to be annulled, if the Holy Ghost be actually given ; because in this case God has approved and confirmed the work of his servants ; and no

\* Bingham's Antiquities, book xvii. chap. v.

authority on earth has a right to undo what bears the stamp of divine approbation. The business, therefore, of unmaking a bishop, goes upon the supposition, that he did not receive the Holy Ghost at his consecration, in consequence of his not coming up to the canonical character of a candidate for the high and holy office. But the history of the church furnishes innumerable instances of persons who were not canonically qualified, being consecrated; and these, by consecrating others, have perpetuated the succession. No man can impart to another what he does not possess himself; and, therefore, all the successors of an uncanonical bishop, must be destitute of the Spirit of God. Hence it follows, that an uninterrupted succession of episcopally ordained men, if it could be made out, would avail nothing, since it is a fact that the course of the Spirit has been interrupted many centuries ago, by the ordination of improper persons.

There is no way of getting over this difficulty but by rejecting, as some have done, the authority of the ancient canons, and insisting that the sins of men cannot interrupt the Spirit of God. Those who entertain this sentiment, suppose that the Spirit is given to a bishop, not for his own benefit, but for the good of the church; and therefore, though *personally* his lordship may be as wicked as the devil, yet *ministerially* he is full of the Holy Ghost. What was the father of the faithful in comparison of such believers as these !!

The authority of these canons, however, is acknowledged by the church of England. At the consecration of a bishop we are informed that "The archbishop, sitting in his chair, shall say to him that is to be consecrated, Brother, forasmuch as the holy scripture, and the *ancient canons* command, that we should not be hasty in laying on hands, and admitting any person to government in the church of Christ," &c. Let us enquire into the reason of these canonical nullities.

Diabolical possession, according to the canons, is sufficient to annul the ordination of a bishop. This goes upon the supposition, that the Holy Ghost will not enter a heart which he finds pre-occupied by the devil. This is modest. If the canon be wrong, we must suppose, either that the Holy Spirit and Beelzebub agree to live together, which is contrary to the apostle, who asks, "what concord hath Christ with Belial?" or else, that the old serpent sneaks away as the Holy Ghost enters. But if this latter be the fact, how shall we account for the vices of some of the holy order, who have not come behind the very chief of sinners? If a pope who is full of the Holy Ghost can be as wicked as a lay-man who is full of the devil, what would his holiness be if left to himself!

As to simony, or the purchasing a bishopric with money, which takes its name from Simon Magus, who wanted to strike a bargain for the divine Spirit with the apostle Peter,—nothing can be more clear than that the canons which annul the ordination of

a bishop guilty of this sin, are supported by sacred Scripture. “ And when Simon saw that through laying on of the Apostle’s hands, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.” \* If this passage does not teach that the Holy Ghost cannot, like worldly commodities, be purchased with money, there can be no meaning in language. We have then the best warrant in the world for saying, that the Divine Spirit never entered into the head or heart of a Simonist. In the eleventh century, says Dr Jortin, “ Simony was UNIVERSALLY practised, particularly in Italy. St Romualdus exerted himself, and preached against it with vehemence. But, says Damianus, the writer of his life, (who was a bishop) ‘ I much question whether he ever reformed *one man* : for this poisonous heresy is the most stubborn and difficult of all to be cured, especially amongst the clergy of higher rank. They promise amendment, and they defer it from day to day ; so that it is easier even to convert a *Jew* than a *bishop*.’ ” \* Let the advocates for the succession tell us where the Spirit was when the bishops were *universally* guilty of simony and not *one* of them could be reformed !

\* Acts viii. 18—21.

† Rem. on Ecclesiastical History, vol. iii. p. 120.

If it were granted that a wicked bishop *in* the church is filled with the Spirit, yet it will not be maintained that he carries the Spirit *out* of it, when he either leaves it voluntarily, or is cut off from it. The sin of schism is of such a nature, that, according to the unanimous testimony of both papists and protestants, the party guilty of it is cut off from Christ. But there have been schisms in all ages of the church, and many of the schismatical bishops have perpetuated the succession. Hear the author of *the Case of the Regale*, a stanch assertor of the divine right of episcopacy: "It would be hard," says he, "to find a bishop against whom some of these objections (relating to the succession) do not lie. For example; all the bishops of the reformation, as well in England as elsewhere, are struck off at one blow; for they were all derived from those whom they now account to be, and then to have been, *heretics*. And the ordinations of the church of Rome must go off too, especially since the council of Constance, that turned out all the popes that were then in the world, \* which were three anti-popes contending one with another. And they cannot say of any of their ordinations at this day, that they are not derived from some of the anti-popes. Nay, all the churches, as far as the Arian heresy reached, may come under this objection, for many of their ordinations were derived from some or other who were Arians, Semi-Arians, &c." †

\* The sin was not in turning them out, but in letting them in again.

† See Rights of the Christian church. chap. ix. p. 367.



Bellarmino acknowledges, “ That for above eighty years together, the church, for want of a lawful pope, had no other head than what was in Heaven.” And Baronius complains, “ How deformed was the Roman church, when whores, no less powerful than vile, bore the chief sway at Rome, and at their pleasure *changed sees, and appointed bishops* ; and which is horrible to mention, did thrust into St Peter’s see their own *gallants*, false popes ? Christ was then, it seems, in a very deep sleep ; and, which was worse, when the Lord was then asleep, there were *no disciples* to awaken him, being themselves *all* fast asleep. What kind of cardinals can we think were chosen by these *monsters* ?” \* Such is the account given by these two famous popish historians ! Who can look this in the face and still plead for the succession ?

To come to the church of England.—She is either guilty of schism, in leaving the church of Rome, or she is not. If the church of Rome, at the time of the reformation, were a true church of Christ, and enjoyed his spirit, then the church of England is schismatical, and cut herself off from Christ and his spirit by leaving his people ; in which case the succession is good for nothing, since their lordships, the bishops, have left the spirit behind them. If the church of Rome were a false church, which God had deserted, then the separation is justified, but the spirit is lost ; for the popish bishops could not give the Holy Ghost to protestants, if they had it not themselves. This is a two-edged sword which cuts both

\* See Rights of the Christian church, chap. ix. p. 551.



ways ; for, whether you justify the separation or not, you destroy the succession.

If it were true that the Holy Ghost is given to bishops, not to make them virtuous, but to give efficacy to their ministrations, it must follow, that they could not fall into heresy ; because God cannot give his blessing to the preaching of false doctrine. Upon this point the catholics are consistent ; they make their pope infallible, and maintain that their church cannot err. But has there never been an instance of a prelate broaching heresy ? Did not hundreds of bishops, supposed to be in the succession, once embrace Arianism, which our bishops hold to be a *damnable* heresy ? What council can be named which did not curse some bishops, the validity of whose ordination was never disputed, for holding opinions contrary to the catholic faith ? And, even in this country, do all the clergy who have received episcopal ordination, preach the same doctrines ? It is true they have all subscribed to the same creed, and conform to the same rites and ceremonies of devotion ; but it is too notorious to be denied, that the articles, homilies, and liturgy, are often contradicted, and their doctrines ridiculed, in the pulpit. Among the clergy are Arians, Socinians, Swedenborgians, Arminians, and Calvinists ; and even the celebrated impostor, Joanna Southcote, boasted of a trinity of parsons in her train of deluded votaries. And how could there be those fierce contentions between the *evangelical* and *rational* divines, as they are called, if they were all kept by the Holy Ghost of the same

mind and of the same judgment? Does not the church of England attempt to justify her separation from the church of Rome, on the ground that the pope is fallible, and that his church has erred? If those, therefore, who possess the Holy Ghost are preserved by him from error in doctrine, is it not certain, that neither popish nor protestant priests enjoy his influence?

The pretence, that the Holy Ghost is not given to preserve from all errors in general, but only from fundamental errors in particular, will not serve the cause of the succession. The church of England has adopted the creed of Athanasius, which declares, that all who reject his explication of the trinity, *shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly*. Now, it is a fact, that at one time, nearly all the clergy in Christendom were Arians; and yet the Arian bishops were in the succession, or else ours are out of it. The homilies of the church of England, to which every clergyman subscribes, as containing *a godly and wholesome doctrine, fit to be read in churches by ministers*, declare, that “the popes and prelates of Rome, for the most part, are worthily accounted among the number of false prophets and false Christs, which deceived the world a long while;” and prays that the gospel of Christ may be preached and received in all parts of the world, “to the beating down of sin, death, the pope, the devil, and all the kingdom of antichrist.”\* But these wretches, the Roman bishops, who are here classed with sin, death, and the devil, as ene-

\* Homily for Whitsunday, part 2d.

mies to Christ, are supposed to have filled our bishops brimful of the spirit of Christ, for the office and work of governors in the church! Here are incontrovertible proofs, if the church of England may be credited, of bishops, whom churchmen believe to have been in the succession, erring in fundamentals. Hence the laity should be upon their guard, and not implicitly receive the dogmas of their spiritual guides;—they may pay dear in the next world, as well as in this, for being priest-ridden.

The canons suppose, that ignorance is a sufficient reason for annulling an ordination, because no man can teach religion who does not understand it. Pope Gregory VI. could neither write nor read; was he not admirably well qualified to discharge the spiritual duties of his exalted station? Sculpus was made archbishop of Rhêmes, when he was between *four* and *five* years of age; was this *grave* and *venerable* prelate filled with the Holy Ghost to teach and govern the church, when he was only just got out of his nurse's leading-strings? There have been thousands of priests as illiterate as Gregory, and others who never saw the sacred writings; but the magic touch of a bishop's hands, it seems, transformed these ignoramuses into infallible guides!

But what shall we say of professed infidels in the chair of St Peter? A council was called at Rome in the year 963, by the emperor Otho, to examine the conduct of pope John XII, when it was proved by many witnesses, "That he ordained bishops for

money; and ordained a boy of ten years old, bishop of Tudortine. Of sacrilege, there needed no witness but eye-sight. Of *adultery*, they said that they saw it not, but they certainly knew, that he abused the widow of Ragnerius, and his father's concubine, and Anna, a widow, and her niece; and made the holy palace a common bawdy-house and stew. That he *put out the eyes* of his spiritual father, Benedict, and killed him thereby. That he killed John, a cardinal sub-deacon, by cutting off his ———! That he set houses on fire, and went armed and harnessed as a soldier. They all, both clergy and laity, cried out, that *he drunk a health of wine to the DEVIL*. That at his play at dice, he would crave the help of *Jupiter, Venus, and other demons*," &c. The bishops, deacons, clergy, and people of Rome, swore to the truth of the above depositions in these words: "If both the things read by Benedict the deacon, and *filthier and greater villanies* were not committed by pope John, let not St Peter absolve us from the bonds of our sins; let us be found tied with the bonds of Anathema, [or cursed from Christ], and be set at Christ's left hand at the last day, with those that said to God the Lord, Depart from us, we would not have the knowledge of thy ways."

The council deposed John, and set up Leo. John called a synod of bishops, who stiled him, *the most godly, and most holy pope*, and cursed Leo and all his followers. The next year, he was caught in bed with another man's wife, and the incensed husband dispatched *his holiness*, by knocking out his brains.



Baronius and Binius, two celebrated historians of the Romish church, make John the true pope to his death, (in opposition to Leo), and trace the succession through him.\* An infidel, a simonist, a drunkard, an adulterer, a murderer, a worshipper of idols and devils;—a *thing* in human shape, worse than a beast, and bad as Beelzebub, is made Christ's vicar upon earth, has the power of saving and damning whom he pleases, is full of the Holy Ghost, the father of the faithful, and the dispenser of all spiritual blessings! All this must be believed, or the succession is lost! It certainly must require all the faith of a *priest*, to swallow so strange a compound of things spiritual, carnal, and devilish.

This is not a solitary instance of the most shocking wickedness in the superior clergy. Unnatural lusts were so frequent and public, that St. Bernard, in a sermon preached to the clergy of France, affirmed *sodomy* to be so common in his time, that *bishops with bishops lived in it*.† Nothing can be a stronger proof of the degraded state of morals among the clergy in those times than the following: “It is an amazing thing,” says Burnet, “that in the very office of consecrating bishops, examinations are ordered concerning those crimes, the very mention of which give horror; *De coitu cum masculo, et cum quadrupedibus*.”‡ If these monsters were under a divine influence, the devil can scarcely be supposed

\* Baxter's Church History, p. 328—531.

† Burnet's Exposit. Art. xxxii. p. 333. fourth edition.

‡ Burnet's Exposit. Art. xxviii. p. 309.

to be without it; and if their inspiration be denied, the succession cannot be supported.

In the *Universal Magazine* for June 1758, a very entertaining account is given of the election of a pope; from which the reader may judge how far the Holy Ghost is concerned in the business. It is stated, that “ During the whole time of the conclave’s sitting, the city abounds with pasquinades, copies of which are daily, in a secret manner, sold in the coffee-houses to foreigners; but they are for the most part, wretched performances. As all magistracies now cease, many disorders and outrages are every day committed, especially in the country; and in Rome itself, it would be imprudent in foreigners, who have no connexion with the candidates, and consequently should have nothing to fear, to be out of their lodgings after it is dark; twenty or thirty persons being generally murdered in its streets, before the election is concluded.”

“ The conclave is the scene where the cardinals principally endeavour to display their parts in artful intrigues; and many transactions pass here, which are far from shewing that they are divinely inspired. It is notorious that whilst they sat to elect a pope in 1721, their animosities ran so high, that they proceeded to blows, with their hands and feet, and threw the standishes each at the other. It is therefore not in the least surprising, that among the other officers of the conclave, are one or two surgeons.”



The English reformers were no advocates for the episcopal succession: they freely admitted a sentiment which is fatal to it; namely, that there is no difference in point of order betwixt bishops and presbyters, according to the New Testament. The arch-bishops, bishops, and clergy, in their book, entitled “The Instruction of a Christian Man,” which they subscribed with their hands, and dedicated to the king in the year 1537, expressly declare, in the chapter of *orders*, “That priests and bishops by God’s law are one and the same; and that the power of ordination, and excommunication, belongs equally to them both.” The same declaration is made in the book entitled, “Necessary Erudition for any Christian Man,” which was published by act of Parliament in the year 1543, and prefaced with an *epistle* written by Henry VIII. In the office for the ordination of *presbyters* in the days of Edward VI, the following text is used: “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,” literally *bishops*. But, afterwards, when the bishops got it into their heads that they are an order of ecclesiastics distinct from, and superior to, presbyters, this text was left out of the service.

The statute of 13 Elizabeth, cap. 12, admitted the validity of the ordinations of the Scotch and other reformed churches, and allowed their divines to officiate in the church of England.

Whittingham, dean of Durham, had no other ordination than the suffrages of the whole congregation at Geneva. Sandys, archbishop of York, obtained a commission, directed to himself and some others, to visit the church of Durham, with a view to deprive the dean as a mere *layman*. The dean having produced his testimonials, “ ‘The Lord President rose up and said, that he could not in conscience agree to deprive him for that cause only, for, says he, it will be ill taken by all the godly and learned both at home and abroad, that we should allow of the popish massing priests in our ministry, and disallow of ministers made in a reformed church; whereupon the commission was adjourned *sine die*.’ ”\*

Archbishop Grindal granted a licence to Mr John Morrison, a Scotch divine, who had only presbyterian ordination, in the following words: “ Since you, the foresaid John Morrison, about five years past, in the town of Garret, in the county of Lothian, in the kingdom of Scotland, were admitted and ordained to sacred orders and the holy ministry, by the imposition of hands, according to the laudable form and rite of the reformed church of Scotland: And since the congregation of that county of Lothian is conformable to the orthodox faith, and sincere religion, now received in this realm of England, and established by public authority, We, therefore, as much as lies in us, and, as by right we

\* Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. i. chap. vi.

may, approving and ratifying the form of your ordination and preferment done in such manner aforesaid, grant you a licence and faculty, with the consent and express command of the most reverend father in Christ, the Lord Edmund, by divine providence, archbishop of Canterbury, to be signified, that in such orders by you taken, you may, and have power in any convenient places in and throughout the whole province of Canterbury, to celebrate divine offices, to minister the sacraments," &c. \*

Bishop Carleton says, "The power of order by all writers that I can see, even of the church of Rome, is understood to be immediately from Christ, given to all bishops and priests alike in their consecration."† Dr Field argues against Bellarmine on the same ground. To cite all the authorities to the same purpose would be endless.

Bancroft, in a sermon preached at Paul's Cross, January 12th, 1588, maintained, that the bishops of England were a distinct order from priests, and had superiority over them *jure divino*, and directly from God. This doctrine had never before been publicly broached in England: it was new and strange to both puritans and churchmen. Till this time it had been always supposed, that the order of bishops, as distinct from, and superior to presbyters, was a mere human institution. Statesmen took the alarm at

\* Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. i. chap. vi.

† Treatise of Jurisdict. p. 7.

the power of bishops being derived from God, and not from the magistrate, as this struck at the queen's supremacy.\* But the new doctrine soon became fashionable among the clergy; and the nonsense which we have since heard about the episcopal succession, sprung out of it.

Most of the English reformers were Erastians. They held, that princes are empowered by the Almighty, to manufacture a religion and priesthood for their subjects; and our ecclesiastical constitution is founded upon this principle. They were so far from contending that there must be an uninterrupted succession of episcopally ordained ministers in the church, that they maintained, that the sole power of appointing to all sacred offices is vested in the Sovereign, and that his appointment is sufficient, without any ordination or consecration at all. Cranmer has declared, that "All christian princes have committed unto them, immediately of God, the holle cure of all their subjects, as well concerning the administration of Goddes word for the cure of soul, as concerning the ministration of things political and and civil governaunce. And in both theis ministrations, thei must have sondry ministers under them, to supply that which is appointed to their several office. The ministers of Gods wourde under his Majesty be the bishops, parsons, vicars, and such other priests as be appointed by his Highness to that ministration. All the said officers and ministers be appointed, assigned, and elected in every place, by

\* Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. i. ch. vii.

the laws and orders of kings and princes. In the New Testament, he that is appointed to be a bishop, or a priest, needeth no consecration by the Scripture; for election or appointing thereto is sufficient.”\*

What blessed work the reformers would have made of it, had they preached up, as many do now-a-days, the inspiration of the Romish bishops and clergy, and insisted that none could be true ministers of Christ who were not derived from them, nor any people obtain salvation who were not under the guidance of pastors included in this succession. Had they admitted such absurdities as these, how could they have justified their own separation? or persuaded a single soul to join with them in it? Instead of this, they boldly attacked the church of Rome as anti-christian, and charged her bishops with being full of the devil instead of the Holy Ghost. The following extract from the homilies, shews the sense of the reformers upon these points, and is as valuable for the strength of its argument, as for the weight of its authority.

“ As the lion is known by his claws, so let us learn to know these men, (the popes), by their deeds. What shall we say of him that made the noble king Dandalus to be tied by the neck with a chain, and to lie flat down before his table, there to gnaw bones like a dog? Shall we think that he had God’s holy spirit within him, and not rather the spirit of the devil? Such a tyrant was pope Clement the VI. What shall we say of him that proudly and con-

\* Quoted from Stillingfleet’s *Irenicum*, ch. vii. p. 391, 392.



temptuously trode Frederic, the emperor, under his feet, applying the verse of the psalm unto himself, Thou shalt go upon the lion and the adder ; the young lion and the dragon thou shalt tread under thy foot? Shall we say that he had God's holy spirit within him, and not rather the spirit of the devil? Such a tyrant was pope Alexander the III. What shall we say of him that armed and animated the son against the father, causing him to be taken, and to be cruelly famished to death, contrary to the laws both of God, and also of nature? Shall we say that he had God's holy spirit within him, and not rather the spirit of the devil? Such a tyrant was pope Paschal the II. What shall we say of him that came into the popedom like a fox, that reigned like a lion, and died like a dog? Shall we say that he had God's holy spirit within him, and not rather the spirit of the devil? Such a tyrant was pope Boniface the VIII. What shall we say of him that made Henry, the emperor, with his wife and his young child, to stand at the gates of the city in the rough winter, bare-footed and bare-legged, only clothed in linsey-woolsey, eating nothing from morning to night, and that for the space of three days? Shall we say that he had God's holy spirit within him, and not rather the spirit of the devil? Such a tyrant was pope Hildebrand, most worthy to be called a *firebrand*, if we shall term him as he hath deserved. Many other examples might here be alleged ; as of pope Joan, the harlot,\* that was de-

\* It is now generally believed, that her ladyship never had the honour of sitting in St Peter's chair.



livered of a child in the High-Street, going solemnly in procession ; of pope Julius the II, that wilfully cast St Peter's keys into the river Tyber ;\* of pope Urban the VI, that caused five cardinals to be put into sacks and cruelly drowned ; of pope Sergius the III, that persecuted the dead body of Formosus, his predecessor, when it had been buried eight years ; of pope John, the XIV of that name, who, having his enemy delivered into his hands, caused him to be stripped stark-naked, his beard to be shaven, and to be hanged up a whole day by the hair, then to be set upon an ass, with his face backward towards the tail, to be carried round about the city in despite, to be miserably beaten with rods ; last of all, to be thrust out of his country, and to be banished for ever. But to conclude and make an end, ye shall briefly take this short lesson, Wheresoever ye shall find the spirit of arrogancy and pride, the spirit of envy, hatred, contention, cruelty, murder, extortion, &c., assure yourselves that there is the spirit of the devil, and not of God, albeit they pretend outwardly to the world never so much sanctity."†

On a review of this essay, we may observe,

I. That the doctrine of the succession is absurd, as, in its consequences, it would deprive the laity of the privilege of family worship, of writing, and even of conversing on the subject of religion ; it would unchristian the supreme head of the English church,

\* Quere.—Were they ever found again ?

† Homily for Whitsunday, part ii.

and all churches which have not set up episcopacy, and borrowed the Holy Ghost from popish prelates; and it would naturally dispose all who wish to be on the safe side in their religion, to go over to the church of Rome.

II. The succession cannot be proved. Its advocates are obliged to trace it through children, heretics, schismatics, infidels, idolaters, simonists, drunkards, adulterers, sodomites, and murderers; but after raking through all this filth, they cannot make it out. The pretence then of being in the succession is a mere arbitrary assumption; there is not a minister in Christendom who can demonstrate, upon this principle, the legality of his orders. Here all sects are upon a level; bishops, priests, and deacons, do not stand on an inch higher ground, than tailors, cobblers, and tinkers; they may all talk about the succession, but not one of them can prove that he is in it. If it were true, therefore, which in fact it is not, that a dissenting minister can furnish no evidence of having the spirit immediately from God, an episcopalian has no right to complain;—the mere pretence of a sectarist is entitled to as much credit as that of a churchman.

III. Strong evidence has been produced that the succession has been interrupted; I have a right, therefore, to assume this as the fact, till episcopalians prove the contrary. But if the chain of succession has been broken, some one, at least, must have intruded into the sacred office, from whom our high

churchmen derive their spiritual powers. If this man had a right to assume the priesthood, so has any other man; the distance of time can make no difference in the right; it is as legal to intrude into the ministry *now*, as it was five hundred or a thousand years ago. Call a dissenting minister, therefore, *an intruder*, or what you please, yet you cannot deny his right to the office, or the validity of his ministrations. If this man's assumption of the priesthood were illegal, his ordinations were illegal also; for no one can give what he does not possess. He who holds an estate by a bad title, cannot transfer it to another with a good one. Hence it follows, that the orders of our episcopalians are good for nothing, and those of the dissenters cannot be worse.

IV. No man, it is presumed, will have the temerity to controvert the fulness of evidence produced in this inquiry, that *the course of the spirit*, through the finger ends of prelates, has been interrupted many centuries ago. If there were, therefore, no possibility of receiving the Holy Ghost, but at the hands of bishops, it is certain that he has long since left the church; and this makes the ministrations of both churchmen and dissenters equally useless. As this conclusion will not be admitted, it must follow, that some person or other, after the interruption, received the Holy Ghost directly from God. But this spoils all; for admit that "our heavenly Father will give the holy spirit to them that ask him;" \* and it must be very foolish to apply to

\* Luke xi. 13.

bishops for it, when it is so very uncertain, upon their own principles, whether this invaluable gift be at their disposal.

Since it cannot be denied that the course of the spirit has been interrupted, the succession of ordination is a matter of no importance at all; because the succession of ordination is contended for, on the presumption that it is the only medium through which the holy spirit is conveyed to the church. If the succession of ordination were proved ever so clearly, it amounts to nothing; ordination is reduced to a mere unmeaning ceremony, since the holy spirit has either left the clergy, or is conveyed to them through some other medium than the hands of prelates. The regularity of ordinations is no proof of the divine influence being attached to the ministrations of the clergy. Barclay, the quaker, makes a just observation upon this subject: "The Spirit," says he, "speaking to the church at Laodicea, because of her lukewarmness, Rev. iii. 16, threateneth to spew her out of his mouth. Now, suppose the church of Laodicea had continued in that lukewarmness, and had come under that condemnation and judgment, though she had retained the name and form of a church, and had had her pastors and ministers, as no doubt she had at that time, yet surely she had been no true church of Christ; nor had the authority of her pastors and teachers been to be regarded, because of an outward succession,

though perhaps some of them had it immediately from the apostles." \*

V. We have seen that the sentiments of our reformers were very different from those which are now so strenuously maintained. They did not compliment the church of Rome as a true church, but pronounced her to be anti-christian; and, instead of attempting to shew that the popish bishops were inspired of God, they proved them to be full of the devil. At present, no minister is permitted to officiate in the church of England who has not received episcopal ordination; whereas the reformers admitted those who had no other ordination than the hands of presbyters or the suffrages of the people. We boast of the reformation; but how far have we retrograded towards popery!!

*Lastly.* Having shewn that the chain of succession is broken, the exclusive power claimed by priests of adding to their own body must be given up, and the right of the laity to assume or confer the holy office must be granted.

\* Apology, p. 287. 8th Edition.



## ESSAY II.

### ON ORDINATION.

---

ORDINATION is the act of conferring holy orders, or of initiating a person into the ministerial office. High churchmen hold, that the power of ordination was vested by Jesus Christ in the apostles, and that the apostles limited the exercise of this power to their successors, the *bishops*. It is inferred from this, that the assumption of the office, or the reception of it from laymen or presbyters, is illegal.

If it were true that bishops are the successors of the apostles, it would not follow, that they only have the right to ordain ministers, unless a restrictive clause to that effect could be found in the New Testament, but the chapter and verse have never yet been produced.

But the bishops are *not* the successors of the apostles. They do not possess apostolical *qualifications*. They can neither work miracles, nor predict with certainty future events, nor discern spirits.

They do not discharge the *duties* of the apostolic office. The greek word, *Αποστολος*, signifies a *messenger*, a person *sent* by another upon some business. Jesus Christ sent his apostles to the whole world to preach the gospel, and baptize their converts: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned."\* They were chosen by him for this express purpose; "and he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, *and that he might send them forth to PREACH.*"† Preaching and baptizing, therefore, are the two great duties of the apostolic office; but our bishops seldom ‡ do either; these duties are performed by others; and their Lordships do little else than ordain ministers, and confirm children.

The *government* of the church is supposed to be one part of the apostolic office; and the bishops, as *governors*, are said to be the successors of the apostles. But this can give them no *exclusive* right

\* Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. Mark, xvi. 15, 16.

† Mark, iii. 14.

‡ Dr Markham, the late archbishop of York, preached part of a sermon in the cathedral many years previous to his death, and promised to finish it at some future opportunity, but never made good his engagement. Though this successor of the apostles has not favoured the church with any *religious* publication, he has enriched the republic of letters with a *spelling book*. "On the Christmas before his

to ordain ; because those who succeed to any other part of the same office, have on this ground an equal right with themselves to confer holy orders. All preachers must be qualified to ordain, since it has been shewn, that preaching is an important and essential part of the apostolic office. The same remark applies to those who perform the rite of baptism.

But the apostles were *not* governors of the church—at least not in the sense our bishops are. To have been the fixed and stated governors of particular churches, would have been inconsistent with their general commission, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And they could not be constituted governors of the universal church, for this plain reason, because it was impossible for them to execute ecclesiastical discipline in every christian society which they formed. For instance, consider for a moment the astonishing travels and labours of the apostle Paul ; how could he exercise episcopal jurisdiction over the churches he planted, when he was generally some thousands of miles distant from some of them ? and how could remote churches know where to find him, when he was perpetually changing his residence ?

decease, he is said to have given £ 1000 to each of his grandchildren, amounting to the number of forty-seven ; and he is reported to have left the sum of £ 100,000 in legacies." See Lit. Pan. vol. iii. p. 1367.

Who does not long to be a successor of the apostles, when he may live like a prince, and save near *one hundred and fifty thousand pounds* ! This man, who was under so great obligations to the state, did not surely give away £ 47,000 just before his death, with a view to evade the legacy duty !!

The practice of the apostles was, when they had planted a church, to appoint governors, or leave the brethren to manage their own affairs, according to circumstances. It does not appear that any officers were appointed in the church of Corinth; because the discipline of it was executed by the whole society. In the case of the incestuous person, the apostle directed the brethren, “when gathered together,” to deliver him unto Satan, and censures them for not having done this already, as they possessed a power of *judging their own members*. \* And this punishment, we are told, “was inflicted of many.” † Sometimes the apostles appointed officers; so Paul and Barnabas, on an itinerant excursion, ordained elders in every church. ‡ And sometimes the apostles employed others to do this work; Paul left Titus in Crete, to ordain elders in every city, and entrusted Timothy with similar powers.

The commission of the apostles included teaching and baptizing, but not a word about governing. When they had constituted a church in any place, instead of stopping to exercise the episcopal functions in it, they set off, according to their instructions, to break up new ground. It is easy to conceive, that when, in the course of their travels, they visited a church, their advice would be asked and followed upon many points; because they enjoyed an extraordinary inspiration of the Spirit, and spoke the mind of Christ; but this no more proves that

\* 1 Cor. v. 1—12.

† 2 Cor. ii. 6.

‡ Acts, xiv. 23.

they are church governors, than that the counsellors of kings are kings themselves.

Our bishops do not possess apostolic gifts and powers, nor do they discharge the duties of the apostolic office in visiting heathen countries, and planting churches by preaching and baptizing; but only execute the discipline of the church, which the apostles appointed others to do; they are not therefore, in any official sense, the successors of the apostles, and consequently, their assumed right to ordain, upon this pretence, falls to the ground.

When our Lord chose the twelve, “that he might send them forth to preach,” he is said to have *ordained* them; but the word, *ποιεω*, imports no more than to *constitute, appoint, elect*; and there is not the slightest intimation that he used any ceremonious consecration.—After the ascension of Christ, only two persons, Matthias and Paul, were raised to the office of the apostleship; and neither of them received any human ordination. The appointment of Matthias is remarkable: “Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, (the number of the names together was about an hundred and twenty,) and made a speech on the necessity of electing another apostle to fill the place of Judas; “and *they* appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.” This shews that the election was in the disciples; and when they could not determine which of the two was most suitable, the apostles did not pretend to take the matter out of



their hands, but all the parties agreed to refer the election to God; they, therefore, prayed, and “gave forth their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias;” and all we read more about this business is, that “he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” Here the whole affair of making an apostle was managed by God and the people, without the eleven, who were present, presuming either to appoint or consecrate him.

The apostle Paul received no human ordination to preach the gospel. “I certify you brethren,” says he, “that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus. When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me, by his grace, to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.” \* From this account it is clear, that when he received his commission from heaven, he did not go to Jerusalem to receive orders from the apostles,—no, nor apply for a licence to the civil magistrate,—but immediately entered upon his work, and was employed for *full three years* in preaching the gospel and planting churches, before he even *saw* an apostle.

\* Gal. i. 11—19.

*There is not the slightest evidence, in the whole of the New Testament, that the apostles ordained either co-adjutors or successors to themselves in the apostolic office.* In the form of consecrating bishops, and in the church of England, Acts xiii. 1—3, is referred to; and is, therefore, no doubt, the best authority the bishops can produce to countenance their practice. Upon this transaction let it be noted, 1<sup>st</sup>, It is full as probable that Saul and Barnabas were set apart by the whole church, as by the prophets and teachers, since no individuals are particularized as sending them away. 2<sup>dly</sup>, There are only five officers mentioned in the account; and as two of them were set apart for the mission, there were only three, if the people be rejected, to perform the ordination, namely, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen. But all the five were officers of the same rank before this ordination took place.—They are all equally and indiscriminately called prophets and teachers. Now, if Saul and Barnabas were put into another, and superior, office, by this laying on of hands, which must be admitted, or the ordination was of no value, and so not worth contending about, then this case proves that equals are authorised to elect and ordain their own superiors; a principle this, which traces the origin of church power to the people; the people may make teachers, teachers bishops, &c. This strips their lordships, the bishops, of nearly the whole of their assumed importance. 3<sup>dly</sup>, At this famous ordination, no spiritual powers are given either to preach the gospel, or to govern the church; the Holy Ghost is not put into the heads, or the keys of St

Peter into the hands of these consecrated gentlemen, which leaves room for suspicion that the ordainers did not properly understand their business, and performed it so imperfectly, that the wisest course, perhaps, will be to nullify the whole proceedings. *4thly*, But, seriously, the plain state of the case is this: The Holy Ghost made known to the church at Antioch, that he intended Paul and Barnabas to be separated from them for a season upon a special mission. The brethren, by fasting, prayer, and laying on of hands, recommended them to the favour and protection of heaven. When they had finished this work, they returned “to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended by the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled.” \* Here this mission ended; but Paul and Barnabas were both preachers long before this. Paul had taught christianity publicly and boldly at Damascus and Jerusalem; and they had both preached to large congregations at Antioch, for a whole year. † All christian churches, which have any piety, imitate, in similar circumstances, the conduct of these brethren. When their ministers make itinerant excursions, they recommend them to the protection of God, and pray for the success of their labours; but they are not so ignorant as to call this an ordination to the work of the ministry.

Admitting episcopal ordination to be valid, it does not follow that it is necessary, unless the New Testament prohibits the exercise of the christian minis-

\* Acts xiv. 26.

† Acts ix. 19—29. xi. 25—26.

try to all those who have it not, and this is not even pretended.

When our episcopalians are pressed with the case of the reformed churches which have no bishops, they generally betray a struggle betwixt bigotry and charity; to save them without bishops would diminish the importance of the episcopal order, and to damn them merely for the want of bishops is shocking; it is therefore gravely and shrewdly remarked, that these churches desire bishops, but cannot obtain them, for which reason they are excusable—the will is taken for the deed. This would appear plausible to some people, if it were only true. But when did they express such a wish? and why did not the English church gratify them? But if episcopal ordination be only necessary where it may be had, it is not necessary to our dissenting ministers, because they cannot have it. Individuals have every now and then applied for it, but generally without success. The author never asked such a favour of their lordships, for two reasons. *1st*, He esteems himself too great an heretic to be entitled to so high a privilege. And, *2dly*, he is afraid that holy hands, if laid upon his profane head, would not be sufficiently efficacious to mend his heart.

Mere ceremonies and matters of order are not to be regarded in cases of necessity. Our Lord healed the sick on the sabbath-day, and bade objectors go home and study this text: “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” God has not left it to

the option of a bishop whether men shall be saved or not. When the bishop of Rome prohibited all public worship throughout a whole nation, was it sinful for men to meet together for the purposes of devotion and instruction? And if bishops now do not ordain a sufficient number of priests, or if those they ordain be ignorant or indolent,—men that cannot or will not discharge the duties of their functions,—must a minister of piety and abilities hold his tongue, and suffer sinners to go quietly to hell, without so much as exhorting them to repentance, for this wonderful reason, because this is the will and pleasure of a right reverend father in God? “If a man see another fall down in the streets,” says Mr Baxter, “shall he refuse to take him up, because he is no physician? If the country be infected with the plague, and you have a sovereign medicine that will certainly cure it, with all that will be ruled, will you let them all perish, rather than apply it to them, because you are not a physician? If you see the poor naked, may no one make them clothes but a tailor? If you see the enemy at the walls, will you not give the city warning, because you are not a watchman, or on the guard? If a commander die in fight, any man that is next may take his place, in case of necessity. Will you see the field lost for a point of order, because you will not do the work of a commander? A hundred such cases may be put, in which it is plain that the substance of the work in which men can do a great and necessary good, *is of the law of nature*, though the regulating of it, in point of order, may be by *positive law*; but



the cessation of the obligation of the positive law about order, does not absolve us from the common law of nature; for then it should allow us to lay by humanity." \*

This he applies to the subject under consideration, and very pertinently infers—"It is better that men be disorderly saved, than orderly damned; and that the church be disorderly preserved, than orderly destroyed." All men who have ability, are obliged, by the laws of both nature and revelation, to instruct the ignorant, reprove the wicked, and comfort the distressed; and a bishop must have more authority over the conscience, than God Almighty pretends to, before he can cancel this obligation.

Objection. "But the regular clergy are quite sufficient, without the intrusion of others." That they are *self-sufficient*, was never doubted; excessive modesty does not rank among their failings. There are ten thousand parishes in this nation. Suppose on an average, two hundred persons attend every parish church:—and this is an over, rather than an under calculation; the sum total is two millions—not a fourth part of the population. Must the rest all perish, rather than an unordained man shall attempt their conversion? Yes, says bigotry;—but charity is indignant at the thought.

If episcopal ordination be necessary, the ordainers must be *scriptural* bishops. If any sort of bishops will

do, some denominations of dissenters are at least on a level with the church. The Moravians have bishops; and to mention no more, even the greatest heretics of all, the Wesleyan Methodists, have two bishops in America. But these, it will be said, are not *true* bishops, that is, they are not *scriptural*, for if they were, no christian could object to them. Let us then enquire, whether those in the church of England be such as the New Testament requires; for, if not, they can have no more authority, and be entitled to no more attention, than the bishops among the sectaries.

I. A bishop is required to oversee and feed his flock.\* But our bishops do neither; they never saw one in four of their flocks, nor spoke a word to one in fifty of them. To say that the bishops employ other persons to superintend and instruct them, is to make those other persons, and not the bishops, their pastors.

II. In the days of the apostles, there were many bishops to one congregation; as at Ephesus,\* and Philippi.† With us there are hundreds of congregations to one bishop.

III. In the primitive times, bishops and presbyters were the same; this will be proved as we go along;—now they differ as much as master and servant.

\* Acts xx. 28.

† Phil. i. 1.

IV. Our Lord does not allow his ministers to assume honorary titles. “Be not ye called, *Rabbi*.”\* To understand the import of this term, it may be necessary to remark, that the Jews had divinity schools or colleges, where the youths, destined to be teachers in their synagogues, were instructed in the ancient Hebrew language, the law, the rites and ceremonies of worship, &c. Literary titles were conferred upon the students:—The highest academical honour was the title of *Rabbi*; which term denoted not merely a *teacher*, but a man of *learning*, and may, therefore, as Campbell has remarked, “be fitly expressed by the English term *doctor*.” Our bishops make a great parade of their *learning*, and assume the highest literary title appropriated to ecclesiastics, that of *doctor of divinity*.

In the same passage the apostles are enjoined to call no man *father* upon earth, because the use of this term, in a spiritual sense, is restricted to our “Father who is in heaven.” In contempt of the authority of Christ, and the paternity of Deity, our bishops stile themselves “right reverend *fathers* in God.”

The apostle Peter advised aged men to assume the office of bishops, but expressly charged them not to be as “*lords* over God’s heritage.”† It might have been supposed that this apostle would be regarded by our prelates, as it is from him they pretend to derive their spiritual descent. But no; instead of

\* Matth. xxiii. 8, 9.

† 1 Peter v. 3.

rejecting this title, they apply it to themselves in a twofold sense; they are church-lords, and state-lords;—lord bishops, and lords of parliament.

Without enlarging upon this subject, enough has been said to shew, that the bishops of the church of England are not such as the apostles constituted in the primitive churches; for this reason they cannot possess any *exclusive* power of ordination, which is all that the argument requires.

Most people, when they read about a bishop in ancient times, associate modern ideas with the name. They conceive of a man who possesses thousands a year, rolling in a chariot, with a long train of attendants, living in pomp and pleasure, ranking with the first nobility of the land, and exercising spiritual jurisdiction over hundreds of churches, and hundreds of thousands of souls. But the truth is, the bishops for the three first centuries were, in general, very poor, and often selected from the lowest orders of society. For some time after, they claimed a superiority over presbyters, they each presided over only one congregation, which was frequently very small. When missionaries, who were usually called bishops, first visited a country or province, they generally commenced their labours in the principal cities; and when small societies were formed in the adjacent villages, ministers were appointed for each of them, called *chorepiscopi*, or *village bishops*. When the great Gregory Thaumaturgus was made bishop of New Caesarea, there were only SEVENTEEN CHRIS-

TIANS in the city. His ministry was very successful at home; and, as a missionary, he preached and formed societies in some towns in the neighbourhood. He ordained Alexander, *a collier*, bishop of Comana, a small place in the vicinity, where he had made some converts. \*

To hear some people talk on the necessity and importance of episcopal ordination, one would suppose that our Lord or his apostles had clearly explained the difference betwixt the episcopal and presbyter offices, had restricted the power of ordi-

\* Baxter's Disput. p. 186, 187. In the preface to this part of his work, Mr Baxter has given an amusing account of the election of Alexander. When Gregory conferred with the society about the choice of a pastor, the simpletons were for having a man of rank and shining abilities. While they were debating upon the subject, Gregory recollected the circumstance of Samuel anointing David, a shepherd, king over Israel; he therefore desired them to enquire, whether they had not among the lower orders, persons eminent for piety, and possessed of ministerial qualifications. This roused their indignation, and one of them had the insolence to tell him, by way of derision, that if he wished them to take a bishop from the scum of the people, they might as well chuse Alexander, the collier. Gregory sent for him, and Alexander was introduced among them, ragged, and besmeared with grime and dirt, which excited general laughter. Gregory withdrew with him, examined him, and found him to be a man of parts and piety; he instructed the collier what to do, and returning to the assembly, preached on the nature of the pastoral office. By and bye, Alexander, who was a comely looking man, was again presented to the brethren, purified from the filth of the flesh, and decked out in the canonicals of the episcopal order. What a change in the man! and what a change in the assembly! The poor collier was now chosen bishop, with only one dissenting voice!—How many of our Newcastle and Kingswood colliers would look grave, and learned, and spiritual, and noble, were they only dressed in potticoats and powdered wigs!



nation to bishops, and had made the imposition of their hands essential to the validity of the ministry. But nothing to this effect can be found in the New Testament.

*It is not pretended that the Scriptures afford the shadow of evidence that any apostle ordained a single bishop, except Paul ; nor that he ordained one besides Timothy.* This must have been a criminal omission, if it be true that there cannot be a church without a bishop, nor an orthodox bishop without episcopal ordination. Ecclesiastical historians have, however, supplied the defect of the sacred scriptures upon this subject. They inform us that the apostles ordained James bishop of Jerusalem, that Paul ordained two or three bishops of Rome, and that John did little else for many years previous to his death, than travel through Asia ordaining bishops for the churches. These accounts are entitled to about as much credit as the vulgar stories concerning mother Shipton.

The only evidence to prove that Paul ordained Timothy is derived from 2 Tim. i. 6. “ Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.” Not a hint is dropped here about an ordination to the episcopal office. It was the common practice of the apostles to put their hands on persons recently converted. Peter and John laid their hands on the disciples at Samaria, and they received the Holy Ghost. Paul laid his hands on all the disciples at Ephesus, and they received the Holy

Ghost.\* Were all these christians, by this ceremony, consecrated bishops? No churchman can assert this, because he cites these texts in support of confirmation, as practised by the prelates.

Mr Baxter observes, upon the passage under consideration, that “it may be imposition of hands in confirmation, or for the first giving of the Holy Ghost after baptism (ordinarily used by the apostles) that is there spoken of. This seems probable from the apostle’s annexing it to Timothy’s faith, in which he succeeded his mother and grandmother; from the effects of it, *the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind*, which are the fruits of confirming grace; and from the admonition to *not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*, which is also the fruit of confirmation.”†

1 Tim. iv. 14, The apostle exhorts Timothy, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophesy, with the laying on of the hands of the *presbytery*.” If the other text refers to ordination, so does this. Were there two separate ordinations, or did the apostle and presbyters concur in making him a minister? If the former, then presbyters may ordain without the presence of a bishop; if the latter, then bishops have no more right to ordain without presbyters, than presbyters without bishops. In this case the power of ordination is divided equally betwixt them, and the union of both is necessary to confer holy orders.

\* Acts viii. 14—17.—xix. 6, 7.

† Disput. p. 205, 206.

Supposing this to have been an ordination, what office was it to? Our high churchmen hold that though a bishop and presbyters are sufficient to ordain a presbyter, yet three prelates are necessary to confer the episcopal office; upon their own principles, therefore, Timothy, at most, could only be made a presbyter.

The truth of the matter appears to be this: On one of Paul's visits to Lystra, the presbyters recommended to him Timothy, a lad who had lately joined their society, as a travelling companion.\* At parting, the brethren recommended their young friend to the favour and protection of heaven, as was common in those days of piety and simplicity,† by prayer and imposition of hands. The apostle assisted at the holy exercise, and Timothy received a blessing to his soul. The gift which heaven imparted to him at this time could not be the episcopal office, because it is expressly stated to be "the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind."

If Timothy was made a bishop, it was either of the church universal, or of a particular church. If the former, he was a pope, clothed with supreme and independent power. But each of the other apostles had as much right as Paul to make such an officer; and this supposes that they might have made twelve governors of the universal church, each exercising a

\* Acts xvi. 1, 2, 5.

† "And when they had fasted and prayed, and layed their hands on them, they sent them away." Acts xiii. 5.

jurisdiction independent of the others; which is as absurd as to suppose that twelve kings might reign over this nation at the same time, each exercising the kingly power separately and independently.

But it is generally supposed that Timothy was made bishop of Ephesus. This pretence, however, is completely refuted in the following extract: “ It appears that the apostle Paul left in the church of Ephesus, which he had planted, no other successors to himself than *presbyter-bishops*, or presbyterian ministers, and that he did not devolve his power upon any prelate. Timothy, whom the episcopallians allege to have been the first bishop of Ephesus, was present when this settlement was made;\* and it is surely not to be supposed that, had he been their bishop, the apostle would have devolved the whole episcopal power upon the presbyters before his face. If ever there was a season fitter than another for pointing out the duty of this supposed bishop to his diocese, and his presbyters duty to him, it was surely when Paul was taking his final leave of them, and discoursing so pathetically concerning the duty of overseers, the coming of ravenous wolves, and the consequent hazard of the flock. In this farewell discourse he tells them, that ‘he had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God.’ But with what truth could this have been said, if obedience to a diocesan bishop had been any part of their duty, either at the time of the apostle’s speaking, or at any future period? He foresaw that

\* Acts xx, 4, 5.

ravenous wolves would enter in among them, and that even some of themselves should arise speaking perverse things; and if, as the episcopalians allege, diocesan episcopacy was the remedy provided for those evils, is it not strange, passing strange, that the inspired preacher did not foresee that Timothy, who was standing beside him, was destined to fill that important office? or, if he did foresee it, that he omitted to recommend him to his future charge, and to give him proper instructions for the discharge of his duty?

“ But if Timothy was not bishop of Ephesus, what, it may be asked, was his office in that city? For that he resided there for some time, and was by the apostle invested with authority to ordain and rebuke presbyters, are facts about which all parties are agreed; and which, indeed, cannot be controverted by any reader of Paul’s epistles. To this the presbyterian replies, with confidence, that the power which Timothy exercised in the church of Ephesus was that of an evangelist,\* and not a fixed prelate. But, according to Eusebius, the work of an evangelist was, ‘ to lay the foundations of the faith in barbarous nations, and to constitute among them pastors; after which he passed on to other countries.’ Accordingly we find that Timothy was resident for a time at Philippi and Corinth,† as well as at Ephesus; and that he had as much authority over those churches, as over that of which he is said to have been the fixed bishop. ‘ Now, if Timotheus come,

\* 2 Tim. iv. 5—9.

† Phil. ii. 19. 1 Cor. iv. 17. xvi. 10, 11.



see that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man, therefore, despise him.' This text might lead us to suppose that Timothy was bishop of Corinth as well as of Ephesus; for it is stronger than that upon which his episcopacy of the latter church is chiefly built. The apostle says,\* 'I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.' But had Timothy been the fixed bishop of that city, there would surely have been no necessity for *beseeching* him to abide with his flock. It is to be observed too, that the first epistle to Timothy, which alone was written to him during his residence at Ephesus, was of a date prior to Paul's meeting with the elders of that church at Miletus; for in the epistle he hopes to come to him shortly; whereas he tells the elders at Miletus that they should see his face no more. This being the case, it is evident that Timothy was left by the apostle at Ephesus, only to supply his place during his temporary absence at Macedonia; and that he could not possibly have been constituted fixed bishop of that church, since the episcopal powers were afterwards committed to the presbyters by the Holy Ghost in his presence."†

The fictions gathered from the ancients, to prove that Timothy was bishop of Ephesus, do not merit a serious confutation. It is said he governed that church thirty years: "A. D. 97, the pagans of

\* 1 Tim. i. 3.

† Buck's Theological Dictionary, Art. Presbyt.

Ephesus, we are told, made a great feast, in which they carried in procession the images of their gods, being masked, and armed with great clubs. Timothy rushed in among them to prevent this idolatrous superstition, but they killed him with stones and with their clubs.”\* It is the generally received opinion that the apostle John wrote his Revelation in the year 96; if, therefore, the above story be true, Timothy must have been the angel of the church of Ephesus, to whom the apostle addressed an epistle from Jesus Christ; the one account charges him with apostacy, the other celebrates him as a martyr. The apostle Paul represents Timothy as prudent, steady and uniform; how utterly improbable that such a man should in old age lose his religion, and almost immediately after be inspired with fanaticism, and throw away his life by an act of indiscretion!

The case of Timothy has been examined the more closely, because the whole cause of prelatical ordination rests upon it. It may, therefore, be safely affirmed, that neither precept nor example can be produced from the New Testament to support the opinion, that the apostles ordained an order of men superior to presbyters, and vested in them the exclusive privilege of ordaining all church officers.

It is admitted, however, that the scriptures afford proof of the ordination of bishops; but these bishops were not of an order superior to presbyters. To make this subject clear to the comprehension of the

\* Calmet, Art. Timothy.

illiterate, it is only necessary to explain the terms. The literal import of *πρεσβυτερος*, *presbyter*, is an *elder*, in respect of age, an *aged person*. This term is, in the New Testament, applied to the members of the Jewish Sanhedrim, because they were principally *old men*. The aged were anciently much venerated for their wisdom and experience, and, therefore, were generally chosen to fill places of honour and trust; hence this term in process of time was applied to *magistrates*, and then it imported not only the wisdom and gravity of age, but the dignity and power of office. Our translators have very properly rendered this word *elder*. We call a man who is far advanced in life, an *elderly man*, and a member of a corporation who has civil jurisdiction, an *alderman*, or *elder-man*, which word was used by our Saxon ancestors to denote both an aged person and a magistrate.

The word *presbyter*, when applied to an officer in the christian church, signifies *governor*; but, as this officer had no civil jurisdiction, like the Jewish presbyters, it was necessary to explain his *duty* by some qualifying term; christian presbyters are therefore called *επισκοπους*, *overseers*, *inspectors*. Hence the apostle Peter\* exhorts presbyters, i. e. *old men*, to take the *oversight*, (*επισκοπουντες*, to *act as bishops*) of the flock, and forbids them to act as *lords* over God's heritage.† It is well known that the Jewish

\* 1 Peter, v. 1, 2, 3.

† "The word *κληρος*, *clergy*, properly signifies a *lot*. But because the land of Canaan was divided among the Israelites by *lot*, the word

presbyters were *lords* over God's heritage, and that the appointment of presbyters in the christian church was borrowed from the Jewish economy; it will follow, therefore, that, if presbyters and bishops are distinct orders of officers, presbyters are the highest in dignity and power;—they are the lords and masters over the church, while bishops are only their servants to *oversee* or *inspect* it. But as no good could be expected to result from a mere transfer of lordly titles and prerogatives from one order of ecclesiastics to another, the best way would be for bishops to resign them, and presbyters to let them alone. Good old bishop Latimer has well described the effects of this strange and forbidden union of *lord* and *bishop*, in the same person: “But this much I dare say, that since *lording* and loitering hath come up, preaching hath come down, contrary to the apostles' times; for they preached and *lorded* not.” And now they

came to signify an *heritage*. Wherefore, believers being God's people, or portion, the different churches or congregations for worship, are called here God's *heritages*. In process of time the word *κληρος*, *clergy*, was appropriated to the ministers of the gospel, because, being considered as the successors of the Levitical priests, they were regarded as God's *lot*, or *portion*. From this prohibition it would seem, that, in the apostles' days, the bishops were beginning to assume that dominion over their flocks, which in after times they carried to the greatest height of tyranny. Or St Peter, by inspiration foreseeing what was to happen, condemned in this prohibition the tyranny which in after time the clergy exercised.” Macknight on the place.

Here we see the impudence of church officers in appropriating to themselves exclusively a term, which, in primitive times, was common to all christians. All good men are, in the scripture sense of the word, *clergymen*. They are God's *lot*, or *heritage*; or, in a more modern phrase, *the people of God*.

*lord* and preach not. Ever since the prelates were made *lords* and nobles, the plough standeth ; there is no work done ; the people starve. They are otherwise occupied, some in king's matters, some are ambassadors, some of the privy council, some to furnish the court, some are *lords of the parliament*, some are presidents, and comptrollers of mints. Well, well. Is this their duty ? Is this their office ? Is this their calling ? Should we have ministers of the church to be comptrollers of the mints ? Is this a meet office for a priest, that hath cure of souls ? Is this his charge ? I would here ask one question ;—I would fain know who comptrolleth the devil at home in his parish, while he comptrolleth the mint ? If the apostles might not leave the office of preaching to be deacons, shall we leave it for minting ? A bishop hath his office, a flock to teach, to look unto ; and therefore he cannot meddle with another office, which alone requireth an whole man. He should, therefore, give it over to whom it is meet, and labour in his own business, as Paul writeth to the Thessalonians : *Let every man do his own business, and follow his calling.* Let the priest preach, and the nobleman handle the temporal matters.”\*

The word *presbyter*, is the term of *office* and *dignity* ; the word *bishop* is used to denote the *duty* of the *presbyter* office, which is to *oversee*, to *inspect*. Hence the same officers are sometimes called *presbyters*, and sometimes *bishops*. Thus the apostle Paul charged the *presbyters* of the church of Ephe-

\* Sermon on the Plough.



sus, to feed the flock, over whom the Holy Ghost had made them *ἐπισκοπούς*, bishops;\* and directed Titus to ordain as *presbyters*, in every city in Crete, men of unblemished character, because “a *bishop* must be blameless,” &c;† but this reason would not apply, if a presbyter and bishop were not the same.

To this it is generally and triumphantly replied, “It is granted that one and the same man is, in the New Testament, styled sometimes a *bishop* and sometimes a *presbyter*; but, although every bishop was undoubtedly a presbyter, it does not follow that every presbyter was likewise a bishop. Aaron and his sons are without any discrimination of order, frequently styled *priests*; but though he had the title proper to their order, they had not the title proper to his,—they are not styled *high-priests*. The apostles Peter and John call themselves *presbyters*; it does not follow, however, as a matter of course, that mere presbyters may call themselves *apostles*. In some cases a man is at liberty to assume a title *below* his proper rank, but in no case to assume one *above* it.”

This argument, if it deserves to be called one, will not solve the difficulty. Episcopalians hold, that Timothy was bishop of Ephesus; the episcopal title, therefore, according to the objection, did not belong to any other officer in that church, though it is given by the apostle Paul to the presbyters, whom he expressly calls *bishops*.

\* Acts xx. 17—28.

† Titus i. 5, 6, 7.

Neither does the argument apply to what is said on Titus i. 5, 6, 7. It is said, that the episcopal office is distinct from that of presbyter, and far superior to it in point of dignity; the duties of a bishop are supposed to be quite different in many respects from those of a presbyter, and to be much more important, arduous, and difficult. But this cannot be admitted; for it would make the apostle reason foolishly to say, that presbyters must possess such and such qualifications, because these qualifications are necessary to bishops, who are officers of superior rank. This would be as absurd, as to require every petty civil officer to possess those great abilities which are necessary to the supreme magistrate. A man may surely know how to use a constable-staff, who is not qualified to sway a sceptre.

Nothing more is required of a bishop than of a presbyter. Each must support a good moral character—be the husband of one wife—keep his family in good order—and teach and govern the church of God.\* It is not required of either, to ordain bishops, priests, and deacons; to administer the sacraments; to confirm children; perform marriage ceremonies, and bury the dead; nor even to preach *in public*. When the qualifications and duties of both are precisely the same, to say that they differ as to office and order, is a contradiction in terms.

The title of *bishop* was formerly given to all persons who were appointed to the oversight of either

\* Acts xx. 17—28. 1 Tim. iii. 1—7. v. 17. Titus i. 5—9.

men or things. Thus Eleazer the priest, in Numbers iv. 16, is styled פקדן, which the LXX have rendered επισκοπος, *bishop*; because he had the *oversight* of the tabernacle and its furniture. The same word in the Hebrew and Greek occurs, 2 Chronicles xxxiv. 12. These were *bishops*, or *overseers*, of the workmen employed in repairing the house of the Lord. For the same reason, an overseer of the highways is a bishop of the highways; an overseer of the poor, is a bishop of the poor; and an overseer of a church, which every presbyter is, is a bishop of a church.

Admitting the identity of bishops and presbyters, it is granted that the New Testament furnishes a few examples of bishops *receiving* ordination, though not a single instance can be produced of their *giving* it. The only persons who conferred holy orders, that we read of, were Paul and Barnabas, Timothy and Titus; the two former were apostles, and the two latter evangelists.

But allowing that presbyter-bishops had the power of ordination, it does not follow that our bishops possess it. The presbyter office is now split into two, and its duties are divided betwixt two distinct orders of men. It has been shewn, that to oversee or bishop the church is a duty of the presbyter office. If presbyters are obliged to discharge the duties of their office *personally*, (and few will dispute this), it must follow that bishops, as an order of men distinct from presbyters, and exercising a part of their office,

are unauthorised and unaccredited intruders into the christian church.

Granting, however, for the sake of argument, that presbyters are not obliged to perform all the duties of their office themselves, it cannot be denied that they are superior to all the drudges employed in their office. It is universally admitted, that a person who holds an office, the duties of which are performed by others, is superior to them in dignity and power ;—they are obliged to submit to his authority; they can make no new officers without his leave; he assigns them their work, and can dismiss them if they do not perform it to his satisfaction. The duty of preserving the peace and good order of society, belongs to the kingly office; but his Majesty employs a great number of magistrates to assist him in the discharge of this duty; and they of course act in his name, and by virtue of his authority. Were they to cabal and make a new king, and new officers of state, they would be justly looked upon as rebels and traitors. Yet they have as much right to do this, as bishops, who only perform a part of the presbyter office, have to make presbyters and other ecclesiastical officers. The power of ordination, if it remain with either, must be in presbyters and not in bishops.

Bishop Stillingfleet reasons well upon this subject : “ Among the Jews,” says he, “ in the times of the apostles, it is most evident that the name *πρεσβυτεροι* imported not only dignity but power; the presbyters

among the Jews having a power both of judging and teaching, given them by their *Semicha* or ordination. Now, under the gospel, the apostles, retaining the name and the manner of ordination, but not conferring that judiciary power by it, which was in use among the Jews, to shew the difference between the law and the gospel, it was requisite some other name should be given to the governors of the church, which should qualify the importance of the word *presbyters* to a sense proper to a gospel state; which was the original of giving the name *ἐπισκοποι* to the governors of the church under the gospel; a name importing duty more than honour, and not a title above *presbyter*, but rather used by way of diminution and qualification of the power implied in the name *presbyter*. Therefore, to shew what kind of power and duty the name *presbyter* imported in the church, the office conveyed by that name is called *ἐπισκοπή*; and presbyters are said *ἐπισκοπεῖν*, 1 Pet. v. 2, where it is opposed to that *lording it over the people*, as was the custom of the presbyters among the Jews. So that, if we determine things by the importance of words, and things signified by them, the power of ordination was proper to the name *πρεσβυτερος*, *presbyter*, and not *ἐπισκοπος*, *bishop*, because the former name did then import that power, but not the latter.” \*

It is shewn, in the preceding essay, that presbyters ordained in primitive times; it is agreed on all hands, however, that this privilege was soon restricted to

\* Iren. Part ii. chap. vi. p. 236.



the bishops. How shall we account for it? The solution of this problem is important, as it completely overturns all that is said about an exclusive *divine right* in favour of episcopal ordination. Bishop Stillingfleet has explained the matter; and, as too much cannot be quoted from so excellent a writer, no apology is necessary for introducing the following extract: “When the apostles,” says he, “were taken out of the way, and the main power left in the hands of the presbyteries, the several presbyters, enjoying an equal power among themselves, especially being many in one city, thereby great occasion was given to many schisms, partly by the bandying of the presbyters, one against another; partly by the sidings of the people with some against the rest; partly by the too common use of the power of ordination in presbyters, by which they were more able to increase their own party, by ordaining those who would join with them, and by this means to perpetuate schisms in the church; upon this, when the wiser and graver sort considered the abuses following the promiscuous use of this power of ordination; and, withal, having in their minds the excellent frame of the government of the church under the apostles, and their deputies, and for preventing of future schisms and divisions among themselves, they unanimously agreed to choose one out of their number, who was best qualified for the management of so great a trust, and to devolve the exercise of the power of ordination and jurisdiction to him; yet so as that he act nothing of importance, without the consent and concurrence of the presbyters, who were still to be as the common

council of the bishop. This I take to be the true and just account of the original of episcopacy in the primitive church according to Jerom." \*

Thus it appears, that when the presbyters became proud, factious, and tyrannical, the churches agreed to throw off the yoke, and to subject their spiritual oppressors to a new order of men. This, however, was only removing a less evil to introduce a greater. These new masters ruled the churches, as well as the presbyters, with a rod of iron. They soon claimed an independent power, by divine right, to play the devil, and turn the church of Christ into a synagogue of Satan. Many of these ghostly fathers obtained the mitre by simoniacal practices, by adulterous and incestuous intrigues; and not a few fought their way to the throne of St Peter in red apparel, and in garments dyed with blood.

Though the ordination of presbyters be lawful, it is not necessary. The apostle Peter exhorts aged persons to *take*, or *assume* the episcopal office. † Two reasons may be assigned why the word *presbyters*, in this passage, signifies merely *old men*, and not ecclesiastical officers. 1st, In the fifth verse it is opposed to youth;—"Likewise ye *younger* submit yourselves unto the *elder*." 2dly, The apostle calls himself a *presbyter*, and makes this the ground of his exhortation. If we take the word here in an official sense, we must suppose him to urge his station in the church as the reason why his advice should be followed; but the

\* Iren. part ii. chap. vi. p. 281, 282.

† 1 Peter v. 1—2.

higher the station the greater the authority ; it would therefore have been more suitable to have styled himself an apostle. On the other hand, if we take the word presbyter here as relating to age, and not to office, we at once perceive the propriety, and feel the force of the apostle's address, and all difficulties vanish : " The aged I exhort, who myself also am aged ; likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves to the aged."

Here is an example of an apostle exhorting old men to assume the episcopal office, and admonishing young men to submit to their authority. This epistle is directed to the christians " throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." From this it appears, that there were multitudes of churches in the apostles' days without any regular governors. In such a case, the dictates of nature agree with the apostle's advice, that persons of age and experience should act as bishops or overseers.

What easy work it was in those times to make a bishop ! Let only the old people agree to superintend the young, and the young people consent to be guided by the old, and the business was done :—a college of apostolic bishops are made at once, without either imposition of hands, or clerical infusion of the Holy Ghost ! but these are not *lord* bishops ;— " Neither as being lords over God's heritage."

If it still be contended, that the persons exhorted were presbyters by office, it is sufficient to reply, that if the episcopal office belonged to a presbyter,

they were exhorted to *take* what they already *held*, which is absurd; and if it did not, they were exhorted to *assume* a superior office, which the objector maintains can only be *conferred*; and this destroys the whole system of priestcraft; for if the episcopal office may be assumed by a presbyter, by purity of reason, the presbyter office may be assumed by a layman.

Much confusion has been introduced into this controversy, by not distinguishing when the word *presbyter* denotes a church officer, and when it signifies merely an old man. It is generally supposed, that, when applied to the apostles, it is to be taken in the former sense; hence it is inferred that the twelve, as apostles, were extraordinary officers and had no successors, but as presbyter-bishops they were ordinary officers, and are succeeded by *us*, say the episcopalians,—by *us*, say the presbyterians; but both are mistaken. An apostle could not be a governor of a particular church, consistent with his extraordinary commission, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. His business was not, when he had founded a church, to sit down and govern it; he either appointed officers, or left the brethren to manage their ecclesiastical concerns themselves, and went on, pursuant to the commission he had received, to preach the gospel in other places. The case of Peter's styling himself a presbyter, had been considered. The apostle John twice styles himself a presbyter;\* but in both places

\* 2 John i.—3 John i.

the word imports no more than *the aged*. Dr Macknight, in his paraphrase on the first of these texts, says, “ ‘The *aged* apostle ;’ ” in his note on the latter, he remarks, “ This appellation signifies, *the aged apostle ;* ” and, in his preface to the second epistle, he observes, “ Heuman gives it as his opinion, that in the title *elder*, there is a reference to John’s great age when he wrote these epistles, and that he was as well known by the title of *elder*, as by his proper name ; so that *elder* was the same as if he had said, *the aged apostle*.” \* The apostle Paul styles himself, Παῦλος πρεσβυτης, which is properly rendered, *Paul the aged*.†

It is generally believed, that public preaching is a necessary part of the presbyter office, but this is another mistake. If our bishops and priests ‡ did not pretend to be the successors of the apostles, and did not interfere with the preaching of others, but only attended to the duties proper to their office, they ought not to be objected to for not preaching themselves ; as it will be proved presently, that the office of the ministry belongs no more to them than to christians in general. The office of a presbyter is

\* Pref. to the 2d Epist. of John, Sect. 1.

† Phil. ix.

‡ The English word *priest*, as applied to our clergy, is derived from the Greek word *presbyter*. “ Who,” asks the learned Joseph Mede, “ can deny that our word *priest* is corrupted of *presbyter* ? Our ancestors, the Saxons, first used *preoster*, whence, by a further contraction, came *preste* and *priest*. The high and low Dutch have *priester* ; the French, *prestre* ; the Italian, *prete* ; but the Spaniard only speaks full, *presbytero*.” See Parkhurst’s Greek Lexicon, under the word πρεσβυτεριον.



to *bishop*, or *oversee* the CHURCH, which certainly does not require the person who fills it to go into the *world*, and preach *publicly* for the conversion of *infidels*. The apostle Paul prescribed only two duties to the presbyters of Ephesus,—to feed and oversee the *church*. The duty of a bishop, he informs us, is to “take care of the *church of God*,” and the qualifications for this office are, 1st, Ability to teach the church the laws of Christ, by which it is to be governed. *Apt*, or *fit to teach*. 2dly, *A good example*,—which is *self-government*. *An overseer must be blameless*, &c. 3dly, Good family government. *One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for, if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God.\** The qualifications required of a presbyter are the same. †

The question is, Do *teaching* and *feeding*, in the above texts, imply *public preaching*? Two reasons may be given to shew they do not. 1st, The term *feed*, used in two of the passages, signifies to nourish with wholesome doctrine; and this teaching is limited to the *flock*, or *church*. Titus’s bishop is required to hold fast the faithful word, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, to exhort and convince the unruly Jewish members of the church, who were for imposing circumcision, and the ceremonies of the law, upon the Gentile believers. Here again the teaching is limited to the *church*. 1 Tim. iii. 2. is in general terms, *apt to teach*,—without specifying in

\* 1 Tim. iii. 5.

† Titus i. 5---9. 1 Pet. v. 1---2.

particular who are to be instructed ; but since the above passages have restricted the exercise of the bishop's prophetic office to the church, there is no reason why this indefinite text should extend it further. Besides, this point is settled by the nature of the office, which consists in the government of the church ; for the instruction which it is the duty of a *governor* to give, must be limited to his *subjects*. If he undertake to teach others, it must be under another character, which any one has an equal right with himself to assume.

2d. Women held the presbyter office in the church as well as men ; and a necessary qualification of these *lady-presbyters*, or *lady-bishops*, (which ever you please to call them), was to be “ *teachers of good things.*” \* But no one can suppose these women-teachers to have been public preachers, when he considers that the apostle would not allow a woman to pray, or even appear *in the church*, without her veil ; and that, from the delicacy of Eastern manners, a female must have lost her character for modesty who should have ventured to throw aside her veil, and harangue a mixed assembly of both sexes. †

As a proof that there were female presbyters in the primitive church, the reader is referred to Titus

\* Titus ii. 3.

† This is not the place to enquire, Whether the restraint which the apostle imposed, was intended to operate in those countries where ladies are permitted to display their charms in public, without their virtue being subjected to the slightest suspicion?

ii. 3. Macknight has the following note upon this text : “ Though the word *Πρεσβυτιδας* commonly signifies *aged women* indiscriminately, it evidently denotes, in this verse, such aged women as were employed by the church, in teaching the young of their own sex, the doctrines and precepts of the christian religion. For they were to be, in speech and behaviour, *ιεροπρεπεις*, as *became sacred persons* ; and *καλοδιδασκαλους*, *good teachers*. These characters, especially the last mentioned, did not belong to aged women in general, but only to such of them as were employed in teaching.” His note on the second verse strengthens this interpretation : “ *Πρεσβυτας*, the word used here, commonly signifies *an old man*. But Le Clerc, in his additions to Hammond, hath shewed, that the LXX use it to denote an office of dignity ; wherefore, *πρεσβυτας* being of the same signification with *πρεσβυτερους*, it may be translated in this passage *elders*. In support of this translation, I observe, that the virtues which Titus was to inculcate on *aged men*, are the same with those which Timothy was to inculcate on bishops and deacons. They were to be *νηφελιους*, *σεμνους*, *σωφρονας*, *vigilant*, *grave*, *prudent*. See 1 Tim. ii. 8.”

The same author translates *γυναικας*, *women*, in 1 Tim. iii. 11. instead of *wives*, as it is rendered in the authorised version ; and remarks, in a note, that “ Chrysostom and the Greek commentators, with the most ancient Latin fathers, were of opinion, that the apostle, in this passage, is speaking both of those women, who, in the first age, were employed in mi-

nistering to the afflicted, and of those who were appointed to teach the young of their own sex, the principles of religion. As the manners of the Greeks did not permit men to have much intercourse with women of character, unless they were their relations, and as the Asiatics were under still greater restraints, it was proper that an order of female teachers should be instituted in the church, for instructing the young of their own sex. Of these I think the apostle writes in his epistle to Titus, ch. ii. 3, 4. where he gives an account of their office, and calls them, *πρεσβυτιδες*, *female elders*, because of their age. And it is believed that they are the persons called *widows*, of whose maintenance by the church the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. v. 2., and whose character and state he there describes, *ver.* 9, 10. Clement of Alexandria reckons *widows* among ecclesiastical persons, Padag. Lib. iii. ch. 12. *There are many precepts in scripture concerning those who are chosen, some for priests, others for bishops, others for deacons, others for widows.* Grotius tells us, these *female presbyters* or *elders*, were ordained by the imposition of hands, till the council of Laodicea; and for this he quotes the 11th canon of that council.\* From what is said of *Euodia* and *Syntychē*, Phil. iv. 3., it is probable they were female presbyters. Perhaps also *Priscilla*, *Tryphena*, and *Tryphosa* were of

\* The canon is, "That priestesses, or women-presidents, are not to be ordained in the church." By the superstition of after times, these ladies were looked upon as a sort of sacred vestals. Pope Gregory II, in his first decree, curses the man who should dare to marry one of them.

the same order, with some others, whom, in his epistle to the Romans, he salutes, Rom. xvi. 3. 12. as *labouring in the Lord*. For these reasons I think the apostle in 1 Tim. iii. 11., describes the qualifications, not of the deacons' wives, but of the women who, in the first age, were employed by the church, to minister to the sick and afflicted, and to instruct the young of their own sex in the principles of the christian faith."

The primitive christians had private meetings for prayer, instruction, discipline, &c. Examples of each might be produced from the New Testament, but it is unnecessary. For many centuries, not only unbelievers were denied admission to these church meetings, but even the catechumens, or candidates for baptism, were forbid to be present at the prayers, and the celebration of the Eucharist. In the private assemblies, the presbyters instructed the church; and, in meetings of the females, the presbyteresses "taught the young women."\* Preaching to mixed congregations of believers and unbelievers, or of unbelievers only, was an office free to all.

1 Tim. v. 17, Instead of proving, as some have supposed, that labouring in the word and doctrine, was a part of the presbyter-office, proves the contrary. For it is evident, that, though all the presbyters ruled, only some of them preached; because the word *especially* distinguishes the preachers from the rest. But if the presbyter-office included in it

\* Titus, ii. 4.



the public ministry of the word, the whole of them must have been preachers.

Though the Jews ordained their presbyters, both of the sanhedrim and synagogue, they gave full liberty to any person who chose, to preach. When our Lord went into the synagogue at Nazareth, on the sabbath day, the minister politely handed to him the sacred book. He preached a most admirable sermon from Isaiah, lxi. 1, 2; “and all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.”\* When Paul and Barnabas were in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, “after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation to the people, say on. Then Paul stood up,” and made an excellent discourse on the divinity of our Saviour’s mission.† Though our Lord and his apostles were not ordained presbyters of the Jewish church, they were not denied the liberty of preaching even in the places of worship belonging to the national establishment. Much less were they told, that, as dissenters, they could not be allowed to exercise their ministry in any place in the nation, till they had got it registered in the synagogue, and had taken oaths and signed declarations, in proof of their loyalty and orthodoxy. No;—Jewish bigotry was modest! This zeal for the honour and purity of religion was left to the *piety*

\* Luke, iv. 16—22.

† Acts, xiii. 14, &c.

of christian princes, who have taught us that *their* toleration of divine worship is religious liberty !

In the days of the apostles, every christian, without any ordination, was at liberty to give religious instruction. Paul and Barnabas, though perhaps the two greatest preachers the church ever had, entered upon the ministry, as we have seen, without asking leave of either magistrates, bishops, priests, or deacons. Apollos was so fully instructed in the christian religion by Aquilla and Priscilla, that, instead of finishing his education at a college, or waiting for orders from any man, or body of men whatever, he immediately assumed the sacred office, and “ mightily convinced the Jews, and that *publicly*, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.”\*

The apostle James, writing to the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad, encouraged them to instruct the ignorant, and reform the wicked. “ Brethren,” says he, “ if any of you do err from the truth, and *any one* † convert him ; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. ‡

In the church of Corinth there were many gifted brethren who *prophesied* in their public assemblies. The apostle explained this term to mean exactly what we intend by *preaching*. “ And he that pro-

\* Acts, xviii. 24—28. † *Any one*. See Macknight on the place.

‡ James, v. 19, 20.

phesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." The gifted brethren were so numerous, that several of them addressed the congregation at the same time, which bred confusion. The apostle directed them, for the sake of order, to let one finish his oration before another commenced; and instead of restricting the privilege of preaching to a single individual episcopally ordained, which is the only order that modern hirelings can dream of, he gave them all full liberty to exercise their talents in rotation: "ye may ALL prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." \*

At the time when Stephen was stoned, "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were *all* scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, *except the apostles*. And they that were scattered abroad, went every where *preaching the word*." † In that church we are told, ‡ "the number of the *men* was about five thousand." These were *all* scattered abroad, and went every where PREACHING. Great was the company of the preachers, when one church could send out five thousand! And great was the liberty of preaching, when all the men in a church might assume the office of the ministry! No wonder that christianity in those days triumphed over all opposition, and soon subdued millions to the obedience of faith!

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 3—51.

† Acts, viii. 1—4.

‡ Acts, iv. 4.

Christians in general have not only a scriptural right to preach the gospel, but, according to their ability, it is their duty to do it. “Exhort one another daily, while it is called, to day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”\* The apostle Peter commands every man who has the gift of preaching, to exercise it, according to his best ability, in explaining divine truth, “As *every man* hath received the gift, even so *minister the same* one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified, through Jesus Christ.”† The apostle Paul exhorted the “saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse” to “let the word of Christ dwell in them richly, in all wisdom, *teaching* and *admonishing* one another.”‡ He also exhorted the Corinthians,—“desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.”|| The Hebrews are severely censured for not making more rapid improvement in christian knowledge, that they might be able to teach others the doctrines of Christ. “For, when for the time *ye ought to be teachers*, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles

\* Heb. iii. 13. x. 25.

† 1 Peter, iv. 10, 11.

‡ Col. iii. 16.

|| 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

of God; and have become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.”\*

When the apostle Paul was a prisoner at Rome, he rejoiced that “*many* of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by his bonds, were much more bold to *speak the word* without fear.” And though some of them did not preach from the purest motives, but laboured to make a party in opposition to him; yet he did not charge them with heresy, schism, enthusiasm, and fanaticism,—epithets which modern bigots are brawling out against dissenters till their throats are dry; he did not call them unauthorised and unaccredited teachers, intruding into the sacred office; he did not whine out a dolorous lamentation,—*the church is in danger*; nor did he forbid their preaching, or so much as suggest a hint that he possessed any such authority. No;—he left this mean and contemptible cant to his pretended successors; his noble soul soared superior to the interests of a party; he saw there was more work to be done than they all could accomplish, and he, therefore, wished success to the labours of the sectaries. His words upon this occasion, deserve to be written in letters of gold. “What then?” says he, “Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, *Christ is preached*; and I therein *do* rejoice, yea, and *will* rejoice.”†

The practice of confining the work of religious instruction to a distinct order of men, has been

\* Heb. v. 12.

† Phil. i. 14—18.



more injurious to the interests of christianity than any thing else. In the primitive times, when almost every christian understood his religion, and could teach it to others, believers were rapidly multiplied. Every member of the church felt interested in its prosperity, and exerted himself to serve it. Some laboured privately and from house to house, among their relations, friends and acquaintance; if they could give but little instruction, they invited them to the public meetings to be taught the way of the Lord more perfectly; others added to their private labours, a word of consolation, of advice, of reproof, in the assemblies of the faithful; and others of superior acquirements, went out into the streets and lanes of the city, and preached to listening and inquiring multitudes, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Thus, Andrew brought his brother to Jesus.\* Cornelius “called together his kinsmen and near friends” to hear the preaching of Peter.† Matthew, the publican, made a great feast, and invited to it our Saviour, and all the publicans among his acquaintance, hoping they would be converted by his conversation.‡ If an unbeliever came into the public assembly at Corinth, the gifted brethren were almost sure to *catch him*. “He was convinced of all, judged of all, the secrets of his heart were made manifest,” and he lost all power of resistance; “and so, falling down on his face, he worshipped God, and reported that God was among them of a truth.”|| And in the synagogues, the temples, and other places of

\* John, i. 40, 41, 42.

† Acts, x. 24, 25.

‡ Luke, v. 27—32.

|| 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

public resort, the rustic eloquence of untutored plebeians converted thousands to the faith of Christ.

One man is now deemed sufficient to take the spiritual charge of a whole parish, which in some instances contains ten or twenty thousand inhabitants; and all the religious instruction which he gives, is read over once a week, in about fifteen minutes, to perhaps two hundred of his parishioners. Who can wonder that so little good is done? The Methodists act upon the primitive plan, and call all the talent among them into exercise; some pray in public, others exhort, others preach in villages, and the best qualified occupy the pulpits in the large towns and cities; they have a rich variety of means and ministers; multitudes are turned from the error of their ways, and the faithful are perfected in virtue.

Our Lord and his apostles made the laity the guardians of orthodoxy. "Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try* the spirits whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Prove all things: hold fast that which is good. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."\*

The clergy, however, soon robbed the people of this privilege. They claimed the exclusive preroga-

\* Matth. xxiv, 4, 5. 1 John, iv. 1. 1 Thess. v. 21. 2 John, 10.

tive of judging what doctrines were true, and what were false; they met together in synods and councils, to frame articles of faith, and rites, and ceremonies of worship; and they required the people, on pain of eternal damnation, implicitly to receive their dogmas. There was no occasion now for the laity to read the scriptures; they were deprived of the right of private judgment, and were directed to look for their creed, not in the New Testament, but in the decrees of councils. To finish the business, the priests railed at the bible, as an obscure book which the laity could not understand, and, therefore, to avoid heresy, ought not to read. It was, consequently, taken away:—the creed-makers had rendered it useless, and the clergy represented it as dangerous.

The way was thus prepared for the introduction of any thing, and every thing which could promote the interest of the priesthood. It was no longer necessary to prove a single article of religion by either reason or scripture; dreams and visions, new revelations and miracles, supplied the place of both. The impure were seen frying in the flames of purgatory, and were heard to cry most piteously for *a few more masses* to help them out;—rusty nails and rotten wood, though corruptible themselves, could cure diseases and raise the dead, which made them of *immense value*;—images would weep and bleed, if not honoured with the *offerings* and devotions of the multitude;—and the priests wore at their girdles the *golden keys* of St Peter, with which

they could shut and open, at pleasure, the kingdom of heaven.—The event has shewn the wisdom of the founders of our religion in giving the people the right to judge, and the power to act, in religious matters; and has demonstrated their folly and wickedness, in resigning their privileges, and betraying their trust, into the hands of crafty and designing men.

The laity have no other interest in religion than the salvation of their souls, and therefore can be under no temptation to corrupt it. But the clergy have too often aimed at pomp, wealth, and power; and, as christianity is opposed to these, they have laboured to keep the people in ignorance, the more easily to secure their object; and this ignorance is pleaded as the reason why a distinct order of men should be supported to perform the services of the sanctuary, and dictate the opinions of the worshippers; like a physician who has injured the constitutions of his patients, and thereby rendered himself necessary to them as long as they live. Had they understood something of the healing art, he would not have dared to give them pernicious drugs; their knowledge would have secured his honesty, and they might have profited by his prescriptions.—A rogue will practise his impositions upon the ignorant; but he will be honest with the wise, through fear of detection.

If the ministry were open to all who choose to enter into it, Christendom would soon be blessed with

pastors distinguished for piety, zeal, and learning; but till then the bulk of them, must, from the nature of things, be ignorant, idle, and wicked. The clergy pretend to be a distinct order of men from the laity, possessed of a divine right and independent power to do what they please in the church. Acting upon these principles, they have assumed the exclusive privilege of making clergymen; they have persuaded the state to deny the people the right of choosing them, and to compel the people to support them. Now, suppose such a system acted upon by any other craft than priestcraft, what would be the consequence? Suppose the tailors, for instance: These nimble-fingered gentlemen form themselves into a corporate body, and no one is allowed to make a pair of new breeches, or stop a hole in a pair of old ones, who has not served an apprenticeship to the trade, and been duly initiated into the order, by a master tailor, with the ceremony of putting a thimble upon his finger, and a goose into his hand. Every parish is provided with one of these state tailors, and obliged to support him in a genteel style, to keep up the credit and respectability of the order. Who is so blind as not to see that, upon this plan, we should be in danger of appearing in the streets in a birth-day suit? There is no competition.—The livelihood of the man does not depend upon the quality or quantity of his work, or upon the good opinion of his employers. According to this scheme, we might have a corporation of *gentleman tailors*, but we should have a nation in a state of nudity, or only clothed in rags.



This system might be defended by the same sort of logic, which is employed by the clergy to support their pretensions. It is said, that a bishop must be a better judge of a minister's qualifications than Jack the ploughman ; so a master tailor must be better able to appreciate the merits of one of his own profession, than a person who does not know a thimble from a nut-shell. A *regular bred* clergyman must be more fit to minister in holy things, than he who, without such previous preparation, assumes the sacred office ; and a person who has served a regular apprenticeship to the art of stitching, must be better qualified to make our clothes, than one who has been brought up to other employments. Once more,—civil society cannot exist without religion, and therefore the state ought to support an order of ministers to teach it ; and men cannot live in these northern climes without clothes, and therefore the state ought to support a corporation of tailors to make them.

When trade is open, the ignorant and idle will starve, and the wise and diligent will prosper. It is the same in religion ; let the ministry be free to all, and the christian world will soon be delivered from hunting, shooting, gaming, swearing, drunken parsons ; for nobody will employ them, or contribute to their maintenance ; and the consciousness of this will deter such characters from engaging in such an employment. Learning and virtue will be necessary to command crowded congregations and liberal support ; and hence the candidates for the ministry, instead of paying court to patrons and prostitutes, will

apply to their books and their God to qualify themselves for usefulness in the church.

The history of the church, in all ages, affords a practical illustration of the truth of these observations. Look at those countries where the established religion is the only one that is tolerated.—Look at Spain and Portugal:—What are the abilities and morals of the clergy? Is it possible to behold a more deformed picture of ignorance and vice combined? The only reason why things are not so bad in this country is the toleration of dissenters.

Many attempts have been made to infringe upon the act of toleration, under the pretence that *the church is in danger*; but as the alarmists have not been able to carry any measure of restriction, the clergy have been obliged to be more diligent in their labours, and circumspect in their conduct. The bishops have, of late, in their charges, loudly demanded of the clergy, an increased attention to the duties of their functions, and to the propriety of their deportment,—merely to counteract the influence of the sectaries, who are said to have assailed *our most excellent church establishment*. Hence some churches have been repaired, and others rebuilt; additional lectures have been set up, and a partial reformation has been effected; but the sole motive for all this, according to the confession of the parties themselves, has been a spirit of opposition to the dissenters. Were the act of toleration to be repealed, the clergy would be secure in their indolence, and have no sti-

mulus to exertion; in which case, it is not saying too much to affirm, that the nation would soon relapse into a state of the most deplorable ignorance, and brutal barbarism.

Sozomen informs us, that there was no preaching in the church of Rome; \* and though Leo introduced the practice, it soon declined, and was discontinued *for five hundred years together*, till Pius Quintus revived it again. Neal has shewn at large in his history, that, under the reigns of Elizabeth and the Stuarts, the bishops laboured to keep the people in ignorance; and, therefore, persecuted with uncommon zeal, those ministers who endeavoured to enlighten them by their preaching. And, in the present day, those ministers who preach most frequently are opposed with the greatest violence. Because an itinerant preaches twice or thrice as many sermons as a stated pastor, every possible effort is made to stop his mouth. Almost every lazy drone can rouse his sluggish powers to declaim against the wandering tribe of fanatics, who compass sea and land to make proselytes.

Ordination was never deemed necessary to a preacher, till within a few years past. Bingham observes, “ that Origen was approved by Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoctistus of Caesarea, to preach and expound the scriptures *publicly* in the church, when he was only a layman. And when Demetrius of Alexandria, made a remonstrance

\* Sozomen, lib. vii. cap. 19.

against this, as an innovation that had never been seen or heard of before, that a layman should preach to the people in the presence of bishops; Alexander replied in a letter, and told him he was much mistaken; *for it was an usual thing in many places, when men were well qualified to edify the brethren, for bishops to entreat them to preach to the people:* As Euelpis was requested by Neon at Laranda, and Paulinus by Celsus at Iconium, and Theodorus by Atticus at Synada. Hallier, a famous Sorbon doctor, is of opinion that they might do it by permission; and he thinks this may be deduced from that canon of the fourth council of Carthage, which forbids a layman to teach in the presence of the clergy, *except they request him to do it.* The ancient author of the comment upon the epistles, under the name of St. Ambrose, says that, in the beginning of christianity, for the augmentation and increase of the church, *a general commission was granted unto ALL, both to preach the gospel, and baptize, and explain the scriptures in ecclesiastical assemblies.*\* The monks, who were only laymen, preached publicly in the churches very frequently.

Our reformers admitted the lawfulness of ordination, but denied its necessity. Cranmer delivered it as his deliberate judgment, in answer to some queries upon the subject, that, “In the apostles’ time, when there were no christien princes, by whose authority ministers of God’s word might be appointed, nor

\* Bingham’s Antiquities, book xiv. chap. iv. sect. iv.

synnes by the sword corrected, there was no remedy then for the correction of vice, *or appointinge of ministers, but only the consent of christien multitude amonge themselves*, by an uniform consent to follow the advice and persuasion of such persons, whom God had most endued with the spirit of wisdom and counsaile. And at that time, forasmuch as christien people had no sword nor governor among them, they were constrained of necessity to take such curates and priests, as either they knew themselves to be meet thereunto, or else as were commended unto them by other, that were so replete with the spirit of God, with such knowledge in the profession of Christ, such wisdom, such conversation and counsell, that they ought, even of very conscience, to give credit unto them, and to accept such as by theym were presented. And so some tyme the apostles and other unto whom God had given abundantly his spirit, sent or appointed ministers of God's word, *sometime the people did choose such as they thought meete thereunto*. And when any were appointed or sent by the apostles or other, the people, of their owne voluntary will, with thanks did accept them; *not for the supremitie, imperie, or dominion that the apostells had over them, to command as their princes, or masters*; but as good people, ready to obey the advice of good counsellors, and to accept any thing that was necessary for their edification and benefit.

“ The bishops and priests were one at that time, and were *not two things*, but both *one office* in the beginning of Christ's religion.



“ A bishop may make a priest by the scriptures, and so may princes and governors also, and that by the authority of God committed them, *and the people alsoe by their election.* For as we reade that bishops have done it, so christien emperors and princes usually have done it. *And the people, before christien princes were, commonly did elect their bishops and priests.*

“ In the New Testament, he that is appointed to be a bishop or a priest, *needeth no consecration by the scripture; for election or appointing thereto is sufficient.*” \*

Pope Alexander VI granted to the University of Cambridge the privilege of licensing twelve ministers yearly, to preach any where throughout England, *for life, without obtaining licences from any of the bishops*; † and several colleges in both universities oblige masters of arts, *whether in orders or not*, to take a text and formally preach from it in their chapels. ‡ Fuller informs us that, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, “ Mr Tavernour of Water-Eaton in Oxfordshire, high sheriff of the county, came, in pure charity, not ostentation, and gave the scholars a sermon in St Mary’s, with his gold chain about his neck, and his sword by his side, beginning with these words: ‘ Arriving at the mount of St Mary’s,

\* Stillingfleet Iren. part. ii. chap. viii. page 391, 392.

† Neal’s Purit. vol. i. chap. 4.

‡ Rights of Christian Church, chap. ix. p. 349.

in the stony stage,\* where I now stand, I have brought you some fine biscuits, baked in the oven of charity, and carefully conserved for the chickens of the church, the sparrows of the spirit, and the sweet swallows of salvation.' " † The clergy of the university must have been very *learned*, when a layman is employed to preach such stuff as this to the students under their care. In those days, however, we see that laymen were permitted to *preach*, and to preach even in *churches* and before *universities*. Sheriff Tavernour would cut nearly as great a dash with his gold chain about his neck, and his sword by his side, as doctors do when decked out with bands and gowns, and aprons.

It is quite inconsistent in the clergy to plead for the necessity of ordination to the governors of the church, and to all its officers, when the matter of fact is, that those who have the chief authority in the church of England are laymen. Legislation, which in every society is the supreme power, is not lodged in the bishops, but in the king and parliament. The bishops cannot make a single law, nor have they even a negative upon the legislative body. Nearly all the bishops voted for Lord Sidmouth's bill, but it was lost; and nearly all the bishops voted against the bill which transferred the supremacy from the pope to Henry VIII, but it was carried. The bishops are not even at the head of the executive power of the church. The king is

\* A stone pulpit.

† Fuller's Church History of Brit. b. ix. p. 65.

supreme head; he has the nomination of all the bishops; and their lordships would incur all the penalties of a *premunire*, were they to deny consecration to the bishop elect. The clergy cannot meet together in convocation without the king's permission; nor are their canons obligatory without his sanction; and even then they bind none but the clergy till they receive the authority of law from the parliament. The same authorities that employ ecclesiastics can put them out of office, just the same as a master, when he pleases, can dismiss a servant. Thus, at the reformation, the civil power put down various orders of monks, friars, &c. Queen Elizabeth deprived all the popish bishops, and this act was declared good and valid by the parliament.\* It is as absurd in the church to consecrate the subordinate authorities, and deny the sacred rite to the supreme, as it would be in the state to crown justices and constables, instead of the sovereign. Either bishops, priests, and deacons, ought not to be ordained at all, or holy hands ought not to be withheld from kings and parliaments.

If Jesus Christ committed the government of the church to bishops exclusively, with a divine and independent right to exercise authority over it, then,

\* 39-Eliz. c. 8. The case of a woman being supreme head of the church of England, and making and unmaking bishops at pleasure, is humbly submitted to the consideration of those clerical buffoons, who make themselves and others so merry at the expence of methodists and quakers, because these sects employ ladies as preachers. The methodists suffer very few females to teach in their public assemblies, and allow them no authority in church government.

it must be impiety and sacrilege in kings and parliaments to invade their prerogatives. Upon these principles, bishops may legislate for the church, annex penalties to their laws, and appoint courts, judges, and officers to carry them into execution; they may excommunicate kings, and forbid the faithful to hold any communication with them, or to obey them; they may interdict all public worship, and play over again the abominable tricks of the popes, laugh at human authority, and plead, that they are only responsible to that God for the exercise of their power who entrusted them with it.

If it be replied that the divine right extends no further than to the execution of the laws of Christ; it is asked, who is to judge when the clergy exceed their commission? If themselves; it must be recollected that they have been infallible for more than a thousand years, and consequently have never exceeded their powers. The protestant clergy are about as impeccable as the Romish. Archbishop Parker, in the days of queen Elizabeth, refused to make any alterations in the church service in favour of the puritans, *lest it should be said, that the church of England had erred!* And when the archbishop crowns the king he makes him swear, that he will maintain the church of England as by law established, which his grace surely would not do, if he could see in her a single corruption or imperfection. In fact there never was a pope wished for more power than to do what was right in his own eyes. The church has pleaded divine authority, to bind her kings with

chains, and her nobles with fetters of iron. If the laity are to judge, then they can increase, or diminish the power of the clergy, as they see fit; and this conveyance of spiritual power by the people, reduces the ceremonies of ordination to mere farce.

It has been shewn, that the apostles ordained no spiritual\* officers, but presbyters, and that, in churches which they could not personally visit, they advised aged, grave, and sober men to assume this

\* The deacons of the primitive church were not *spiritual* officers. The occasion of their appointment at first was this. In the distribution of the alms of the church among poor widows, the Hellenists (i. e. the Jews who spoke the Greek language, and were strangers at Jerusalem) complained that their widows were neglected. To remedy this inconvenience, "The twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should *leave the word of God* and *serve tables*. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you, seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, whom we may appoint over *this business*; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, &c. whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." Serving tables, which was the business of the deacons, is here *opposed* to the ministry of the word; the ordination of a deacon, therefore, cannot possibly be an ordination to the ministry;—it is properly an ordination to the office of overseer of the poor. The clergy would have more scripture on their side, were they to insist that none can be qualified to relieve the needy, who are not episcopally ordained, by persons who can trace their spiritual descent from the apostles, than they have, when they make a ceremonious consecration necessary to a preacher of the gospel. It will avail nothing to say, that Stephen and Philip were both preachers afterwards, for this ordination, we are expressly told, was to *the business of serving tables*. Every overseer of the poor has a right to preach the gospel, if he can, as well as Stephen and Philip.



office. They have said nothing about the necessity of ordination, nor who are to perform it, nor what rites and ceremonies are to be used in it; from which we may justly infer, that it is a matter of no great moment. Some indeed have contended, that Acts, 14. 23, should be rendered,—“And when they had ordained presbyters *by the suffrages of the people.*” In the old English bible it is rendered thus:—“And when they had ordained them elders *by election.*” But Dr Campbell, has proved, in a very satisfactory manner, that, “The common import of the word *χειροτονησαντες*, is no more than to constitute, ordain, or appoint *any how.*” \* The imposition of hands is considered, by almost all parties, as necessary to an ordination. But though we read of the apostles laying hands on persons recently baptized, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, and on the overseers of the poor, when elected to serve tables, we nowhere read of laying on of hands at the ordination of presbyters. The modesty of bishops has permitted them to usurp the exclusive prerogatives of Jesus Christ, and to say, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost;” they ought therefore to convey this invaluable gift, by the same ceremony which he used, and instead of imposition of hands, they should *breathe* upon the candidates for holy orders.

Objection,—“The apostle exhorts Timothy to *lay hands suddenly on no man.*” † He does; but he is not there speaking on the ordination of ministers, but on the exercise of church discipline upon of-

\* Preliminary dissertation x. part, v. sect. vii. † 1 Tim. v. 22.

fenders: "Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear." And as using the rod is a very ungrateful task, and to use it judiciously a very difficult task, the apostle exhorted Timothy to discharge this duty faithfully and impartially: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." The injunction immediately follows,—*"lay hands suddenly on no man;"* which, as it is connected with the exercise of discipline, undoubtedly relates to it. Timothy had now been at Ephesus long enough to be intimately acquainted with the brethren; there could, therefore, be no reason why he should defer ordaining presbyters for that church, if any were wanted; but there were the strongest reasons why he should not suddenly take off church censures, and restore the immoral to the privileges of the faithful, (which was done in the primitive church by the imposition of hands;) for this, instead of making others *fear*, and thereby operating as a restraint upon them, would have exposed discipline to ridicule, and emboldened transgressors. In such a case, Timothy would have been implicated in their guilt; on which account it is added,—*"neither be partakers of other men's sins; keep thyself pure."*

It is not denied that the members of the church of England have a right to model their church as they please, provided they do not infringe upon the rights of other christian churches; but when they call their

own the most pure and apostolic church in Christendom, and pronounce all other churches heretical and schismatic, which the state ought to watch with an eye of suspicion, it is high time to humble their pretensions and expose their extravagance. All the churches in this country have omitted some things which were deemed important by the primitive christians, and have added others for which they can find no authority in the New Testament. The apostle Paul required women to wear a veil in the church, instituted an order of deaconesses, and commanded christians to salute one another with an holy kiss. One of our Lord's last commands to the apostles, was to wash one another's feet ; and James commanded the presbyters to anoint the sick with oil. What church attends to all these things? or supposes the observance of them to be of perpetual obligation? And who can find in the New Testament, archbishops, archdeacons, deans, proctors, surrogates, prebends, chancellors, &c. &c.? We have seen that, in constituting churches, the apostles were guided by circumstances ;—they admitted of diversity, and never dreamed about uniformity : hence in some churches they appointed presbyters, in others they advised the aged to assume the office, in others they left the exercise of discipline to all the members in a general meeting ; and the office of the ministry they left free to all. A few grains of common sense, and the spirit of christianity, are better guides in these matters, than all the infallible priests the church has ever produced.

Upon the principles laid down and established in this essay, most, if not all, of the sects in this country may defend their church order. That class of officers in the Wesleyan societies, denominated *leaders*, have been more objected to than any description of officers in any other community. These leaders answer to the presbyter-bishops of the primitive christians, in the following particulars.

*1st*, One duty of the presbyter office is to feed the flock. This the leaders do, by giving instruction, advice, and counsel, in their class-meetings.

*2dly*, Another duty of the presbyter office is to *oversee*, or *rule* the church, and this is done by the methodist-leaders. They are well acquainted with their flocks, and give them directions as to their christian deportment. The leaders'-meeting has power to admit and exclude members, to elect new leaders, to inflict church censures on the immoral, and to make new regulations for the particular society to which they belong, provided these do not infringe upon the general rules of the body.

*3dly*, The presbyters were subject to the evangelists, or itinerant preachers, such as Timothy and Titus. And the methodist-leaders are subject to the itinerant preachers.

*4thly*, There were several presbyters in every church of any magnitude; and there are many leaders in all the principal societies. The epistle

to the church of Philippi is inscribed to all the saints, with the *bishops* and deacons. Nothing, perhaps, has more puzzled the advocates for diocesan episcopacy, than the circumstance of finding, in the New Testament, a plurality of bishops over a single congregation. The episcopalians who understand all mysteries, have ascertained the precise number of bishops which governed the church of Philippi; they, of course, reduce the plurality to *two*. It is certain, however, that there were *more* than two bishops in the church of Ephesus. The apostle, in addressing them, says, “*all of you.*” It is proper to say to two persons, “*Both of you;*” but ridiculous to say, “*All of you.*” But what necessity for even two bishops over a few christians in one city, when one of our *lord* bishops thinks himself quite sufficient to oversee many hundreds of congregations.\* To explain this mystery, they tell us, that the Jews and Gentiles were divided into separate churches in the same city, or town, and that a bishop was appointed over each. But how could the apostle Paul countenance this, when he publicly reproved Peter for withdrawing with the Jewish converts from the communion of the Gentiles? To remove this difficulty, they pretend that this public reproof was only a juggling trick, contrived by the apostles themselves, to sooth the resentment of the Gentiles at the haughty behaviour of the Jews; thus they sacrifice the integrity of these men of God to justify their own lordly importance.

\* The diocese of the bishop of London includes in it the East and West Indies, and all our foreign possessions!!!



5thly, Some of the presbyters, we have seen, were preachers; and so are some of the methodist leaders.

6thly, An order of female presbyters was instituted by the apostles, whose office it was to "teach the young women." To these answer the female leaders, whose business it is to instruct those of their own sex.

This coincidence is the more remarkable, as it probably never occurred to Mr Wesley, and the preachers who assisted him in the constitution of the methodist societies, that in making leaders, and in fixing their powers and duties, they were creating an order of church-officers similar to the presbyter-bishops of the first christians; but this shews how naturally good men, acting under the influence of the same religious principles, are led to adopt the same plans.

As the subject of ordination, by the imposition of hands, has recently engaged the attention of many of the methodist preachers, it may not be amiss to observe, that, if it be introduced into the connection, the *leaders*, or presbyters, are the proper subjects of it, and *not the preachers*; because there are a few examples in the New Testament of ordination to the presbyter-office, but none whatever of ordination to the work of the ministry. There can be no serious objection, it is presumed, to initiate the leaders, both male and female, into office

by the imposition of hands ; but, since there is no scripture evidence to countenance the use of this ceremony in the ordination of presbyters ; and since “ it is easier,” as one of the preachers has wittily remarked in a late publication, “ to put hands *upon* a person’s head, than to put mental qualifications *into* it ;”—it is humbly submitted to their consideration, whether it would not be the wisest measure to keep their hands to themselves.

## ESSAY III.

### ON THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND POWERS OF THE CLERGY.

---

**M**ost churchmen are of opinion that Jesus Christ entrusted the Holy Ghost to the custody of bishops, with an exclusive power of communicating his spiritual gifts to the clergy, for the edification of the faithful; and that the ministrations of those who receive the episcopal benediction are full of spirit and life. These opinions cannot be supported, if the uninterrupted succession cannot be proved. For, admitting an interruption, it will follow, that wherever the succession failed, there the spirit was lost; the next bishop, after the chain was broken, was either self-constituted, or appointed by those who had not the spirit to give; and, in either case, his ministrations and ordinations must have been nugatory. As the succession, therefore, has been disproved, the pretensions of the clergy must fall to the ground. But since they will not easily be persuaded that they possess no exclusive supernatural authority, we must

take the trouble of investigating the particulars in which it is supposed to exist.

## SECTION I.

### ON THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST IN ORDINATION.

At the ordination of a priest, the bishop, laying his hands on the head of the candidate, says, “Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, committed to thee by the imposition of our hands.” There is some controversy among churchmen about the meaning of these words. The moderate party insists, that it is the *office*, and not the divine spirit, which is given by the imposition of hands; and that the words, “receive the Holy Ghost,” are to be understood as a pious wish, or prayer.

If this explanation be admitted, it is reasonable to enquire, why any other person may not perform the ceremony of ordination just as well as a bishop? No text of scripture can be quoted, which vests in bishops an exclusive power of making ministers. After paying the highest compliments to episcopal piety, I hope it will not be deemed presumption to affirm, that the prayers of a whole congregation for the inspiration of the pastor of their choice, may possibly be as successful, as the prayers of a bishop for the inspiration of a priest; and, if this be granted,

it cannot well be denied, that the ordinations of dissenters are as valid as those of churchmen. \*

The general sentiment, however, is, that the bishop confers the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands; and it must be confessed, this seems to be the plain and obvious meaning of the words. The phrase,

\* Though I have modestly put the case upon the supposition that a single bishop may have as much interest with the Almighty, as a whole congregation of the people, because my argument required no more, I am not insensible, that some of the sacred order have been quite as much in love with some other things, as with prayer-books.

Theophylact, patriarch of Constantinople, "who sold every ecclesiastical benefice as soon as it became vacant, had in his stable above two thousand hunting horses, which he fed with pignuts, pistachios, dates, dried grapes, figs steeped in the most exquisite wines, to all which he added the richest perfumes. One holy Thursday as he was celebrating high mass, his groom brought him the joyful news that one of his favourite mares had foaled; upon which he threw down the liturgy, left the church, and ran in raptures to the stable, where having expressed his joy at that *grand* event, he returned to the altar to finish the *divine* service, which he had left interrupted during his absence." Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 400. Note [o] edit. 1803.

The following advertisement, which appeared in Jackson's Oxford Journal, is a proof that something of this pious disposition still exists in the minds of some of the holy tribe.

#### "NEXT PRESENTATION.

"To be sold by Auction, by Hoggart and Phillips, at the Auction Mart, opposite the Bank of England, on Thursday next, the 11th day of April, 1811, at twelve o'clock,—The next presentation to a most valuable living, in one of the first sporting countries: the vicinity affords the best coursing in England, also excellent fishing, an extensive cover for game, and numerous packs of fox-hounds, harriers, &c.; it is half an hour's ride from one of the first cities, and not far distant from several most fashionable watering places; the surrounding country is beautiful and healthy, and the society elegant and fashionable.

"The incumbent is about fifty years of age, &c."



“Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” is addressed to the candidate, not to God; and, instead of expressing a wish, is imperative. It is scarcely credible, that the greatest dunce would employ such terms, either in prayer to heaven, or in wishes to a friend. All the advocates for the succession, lodge the power of giving the Holy Ghost in the hands of the bishops, and this high authority is generally claimed by their lordships, and admitted by their admirers.

It is quite natural to suppose, that bishops would not affect such powers, if they had not the clearest warrant of holy scripture to support them. Let us then proceed to investigate this subject.

Considerable stress is laid upon Matt. xxviii, 19, 20. “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Now, in the name of common sense, what does this text say about bishops, ordination, or the subjection of the spirit to the will of man? The words contain a precept, to teach all nations, as well as a promise of the divine presence; and it is only in the discharge of the duty that the privilege can be enjoyed. Our Lord does not engage to be with them if they stay at home, and live in ease and luxury. Our bishops do not go and teach all nations; they do not even *teach* our own nation, but leave this

work to others ; they have therefore nothing to do with the promise.

There is a promise to the full as strong as this, made to every christian, in Heb. xiii, 5. " He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Does this gracious declaration authorise every pious man, or woman, to ordain ministers for the church, and inspire them with the Holy Ghost ?

Another text is John, xiv, 16, 17. " I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the spirit of truth." This promise is prefaced with a condition: "*Keep my commandments*, and I will pray," &c. Wicked priests have, therefore, no interest in this passage ; it concerns those only who move in the path of obedience. But, further, it is not said that this heavenly comforter is given by bishops, but by God. This promise is extended in the following verses to all christians generally: " He that hath my commandments, *and keepeth them*, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and *will manifest myself to him*. If a man love me, *he will keep my words* ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, *and make our abode with him*." Private christians are as much interested in these promises as priests, and either both, or neither, of the parties are authorised by them, to impart the gift of the Holy Ghost,

Some have supposed that the promise of Christ, to be with the apostles “always, even to the end of the world,” was not made to the *men*, who all died soon after, but to the *apostolic office*, which was to continue to the end of time. For the same reason the other promise \* must be interpreted in the same manner. Here is a difficulty,—how an office can be a recipient of promises; and, particularly, how an office can be comforted! By parity of reason, the general promises of divine support and consolation are not made to *christians*, but to the *profession of christianity*; the profession is to be strengthened, and the profession is to be comforted! By uniting the divine presence to the *office* instead of the *man*, an objection to the validity of the ministrations of wicked priests is answered. Christ is in the office, and, therefore, the service is efficacious, though the devil be in the officer! † With equal propriety it may

\* John, xiv. 16, 17.

† Some persons, not much read in church divinity, will suspect, if no authority be produced, that the author is speaking here without book. Bishop Beveridge, in his sermon on Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. applies the promise to the *apostolic office*; and, on that ground, apologizes for the ministrations of wicked priests. But to give a modern instance: The Rev. Henry Phillpots, rector of Gateshead, vicar of Bishop-Middleham, and domestic chaplain to the bishop of Durham, in a sermon preached before the bishop of St. David's, at the *consecration* of a new church at Wall's-end, in the year 1809, avows these sentiments: “It was to the *office* apostolical, that this great promise was made. This then is the *office*, to which the promise of our Lord was made, that, *He would be with it always, even unto the end of the world*;—with *it*, that is, not so as peculiarly to favour the *persons* of those that are invested with it, but so as to make the *office itself* effectual to the great purposes for which it was constituted. For them, [the ministers,] it is very possible, that they may be themselves *cast-aways*, and yet that they may be

be affirmed, that the profession of christianity, as being the subject of christian promises, will be saved, though the professors, as being destitute of personal virtue, will be damned !

No scripture is of private interpretation. Jehovah said to Moses, " My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." \* This promise was not limited to Moses, or to an order of prophets like unto himself; the whole of the Israelites enjoyed the divine presence, as well as their leader. The reason is, Moses was the representative of the Jewish church, and therefore the promises which belonged to the whole congregation were made to him. The same remark applies to the apostles. They were the representatives of the christian church, and therefore the promises of the presence of Christ, and the comforts of his spirit, *for ever*, though made to the apostles, belong to all believers in all ages.

*humble instruments in God's hand, to communicate the saving knowledge of his truth to thousands. It is not personal holiness, it is not even zeal for God's honour, and for the salvation of men, (how much soever it may be the bounden duty of ministers to pray and labour after those graces ; and how tremendous soever may be the danger to ourselves, if we miss obtaining them,) yet it is not that holiness, nor that zeal, which, of themselves, can make any ministerial service of the slightest avail."* If this be true, only put the devil into *office*, and he will make as good a parson as the very best of you ! The inhabitants of Wall's-end would understand the reason of this apology ; but strangers will think it ill-timed : Their reverences were met together to make the *building* holy, and the *ground* around it holy ; at such a time the people might naturally expect to hear something about a holy *priesthood* ! but with some churchmen, *places* must be *sacred* and *priests* may be *profane*.

\* Exod. xxxiii. 14.

The strength of the cause rests upon John, xx. 22. "He breathed on them, and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost." This could not be an ordination to the apostleship, for they had been in office upwards of three years. Our Lord did not give the Holy Ghost to the apostles by imposition of hands, but by breathing upon them, and he does not say a word about their being empowered to confer this heavenly gift upon others. This text, therefore, affords no support to the practice of modern prelates, unless they take it for granted, that they are authorized to do every thing which Jesus Christ did; and in that case, they have power to open the eyes of the blind, and to raise the dead.

Let us next enquire, whether the apostles ~~even~~ pretended to impart the Holy Ghost to others. Two texts \* are usually referred to. In the first we find that Peter and John visited the converts at Samaria, and "prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." The circumstance of the apostles praying to God to give the divine spirit, is positive evidence that he was not at their disposal. There would have been just as much propriety in supplicating the Supreme Being to lay on hands, as to give the Holy Ghost, if they themselves were to do both.—The other text is nothing to the purpose: "When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them." But it is

\* Acts, viii. 15, 16, 17.—xix. 6.



not so much as hinted that Paul either gave, or pretended to give this valuable gift. This was not an ordination to the ministry, because it was not a select number, but the whole church, which received the imposition of hands, and the gift of the spirit.—In both these cases, the *extraordinary* gifts of the spirit were communicated: “Simon *saw* that, through laying on of the apostle’s hands, the Holy Ghost was given” to the Samaritans, which he could not have done had the ordinary gifts only been imparted; and it is said of the Ephesians, that “they *spake with tongues and prophesied.*” But these are gifts which our bishops do not possess, and, therefore, cannot transfer. There was no ordination to the ministry in either case, (and it is to none but ministers, that bishops pretend to give the Holy Ghost,) as these christians had only been recently baptized; and even churchmen quote these texts in support of confirmation.

Thus we have seen that there is neither precept nor example in the whole of the New Testament, to countenance the practice of one christian minister pretending to give the spirit of God to another. Does it follow from the nature of things, that the Holy Ghost, like worldly goods, may be transferred from one to another at pleasure? If so, a private christian may give the Holy Ghost just as well as a bishop. The apostle Peter informed the three thousand who were pricked to the heart on the day of Pentecost, that, on their repenting and submitting to christian baptism, *they should receive the gift of*

*the Holy Ghost.* He goes on to comment upon this promise thus: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”\* When our Lord breathed on the apostles, and said, “receive ye the Holy Ghost,” he was silent concerning their successors; but the promise of the apostle to private christians, extends to their *children*, and runs on in a descending series to the latest period of the church. Private christians have, therefore, a better right to lay hands on their children, and say, “receive ye the Holy Ghost,” than bishops have to act the same farce over priests. Had our Lord added, in his address to the apostles, “For the gift is to you, and to your children, or immediate successors, and to all future generations of episcopally ordained ministers, even as many as the Lord our God shall call to the priesthood,”—we should be stunned to death with the clamour of priests, about the divine spirit being subjected to their power. It would be deemed impious and blasphemous in a parent, who should affect to dribble the Holy Ghost through his finger-ends into the heads of his children; and it must be as bad, or worse, in a *minister of religion*, who ought to know better, to assume any such authority over the Holy One of Israel.

None but the heart-searching God can know who are proper to receive the spirit for the work of the ministry. A bishop who has no means of ascertaining the motives which influence a candidate for holy

\* Acts, ii. 38, 39.

orders, will as soon give the Holy Ghost to a Simon Magus, as to an apostle ; and with his perfect ignorance of the secret working of the human mind, to assume the privilege of disposing to whom he pleases, of one of the sacred persons in the GODHEAD, is shockingly profane.

But there is no contradicting facts. The bishops do *not* give the Holy Ghost. They do not confer his *extraordinary* gifts ; for neither the ordainer nor the ordained can speak with tongues, or discern spirits, or work miracles. They do not confer his *ordinary* gifts ; for they neither regenerate their priests, nor shed the love of God abroad in their hearts, nor impel them forwards in the paths of holy obedience. It is as foolish, therefore, as it is wicked to make such pretensions.

If we are to judge from the conduct of the bishops, they have got the Spirit completely in their power. He is permitted to excite some inward motions in deacons ; but they have not a sufficient measure of his influence to enable them to absolve the sick, and administer the Lord's-supper. When they receive priests' orders, they are favoured with another portion of his influence ; but still they have not enough to qualify them to govern the church ; much less have they any to spare to give to others, hence presbyter ordination is deemed good for nothing. The Holy Ghost must, therefore, be received a third time, to qualify for the office and work of a bishop. No text of scripture is quoted to support the practice.

of giving the Spirit of God by piece-meal in this way; and it is altogether indefensible, except as necessary to uphold a monstrous system of priestcraft. Some religious ceremonies may be laughed at for their foolishness; but when the divine spirit is halved and quartered in such a manner, the shocking impiety of the thing must excite in every virtuous breast a struggle betwixt terror and indignation.

If it were supposed possible to receive the Holy Ghost immediately from God, in answer to prayer, it would be unnecessary to apply to a bishop. It will, therefore, avail high churchmen nothing to prove merely, that the apostles conferred the Holy Spirit, and authorised their successors to do the same, (though it is shewn that they can prove neither); except they can also make it appear, contrary to the express words of scripture, that our “heavenly Father will” *not* “give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him;” because if God has reserved to himself the power of answering the prayers of his people, a dissenter may possibly be as successful by supplication to a throne of grace, as a churchman by kneeling devoutly to a bishop.

The authority of the reformers will weigh more with some people than either scripture or reason. Cranmer gives his judgment upon this point in the following words: “In the admission of many of these officers (of the church) bee divers comely ceremonies and solemnities used, which be not of necessity, but only for a goodly order and semely

fashion. For if such offices and ministrations were committed without such solemnitye, thei were nevertheless truly committed. *And there is no more promise of God, that grace is given in the committing of the ecclesiastical office, then it is the committing of the cyvile.*" \* These sentiments are christian. Use as many ceremonies as you please—lay on holy hands, breathe holy breath, &c. &c. Only allow that these things are not necessary, and do not unchristian those who have so much film upon their eyes, that they cannot perceive them to be quite so comely as they appear to your view. The apostles put the overseers of the poor into office by the imposition of hands; and the same, or other ceremonies may be used in conferring other offices. Let it be allowed, that you can give as much grace to an exciseman or a constable, as a bishop can to a priest, and the sentiment is candid and admissible. By the bye, it is a pity that ceremonious ordination to civil offices is not more frequent; it might make the ordinations of bishops more cheap.

Nelson says, that "the words, *receive thou the Holy Ghost, &c.* are in none of the ancient rituals."† In fact, there is no evidence whatever that the clergy affected to give the spirit before the thirteenth century; but when they had claimed the titles, it is no wonder that they usurped the prerogatives of the Supreme Being.

\* Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*, part ii. chap. 8. p. 591.

† Rights of the Clergy. Art. Ordination.



In the primitive church, the presbyters were ordained by imposition of hands and prayer, and every bishop used what form of prayer he pleased on the occasion. The only form preserved in the constitutions \* runs in these words: "Look, O Lord, upon this thy servant, who is chosen into the presbytery by the suffrage and judgment of all the clergy, and fill him with the spirit of grace and counsel, that he may help and govern thy people with a pure heart. In like manner, as thou hadst respect to thy chosen people, commanding Moses to make choice of elders, whom thou didst replenish with thy spirit. And now, Lord, do the same thing, preserving in us the never-failing spirit of thy grace; that he, being full of healing powers and instructive discourse, may with meekness teach thy people, and serve thee sincerely with a pure mind, and willing soul, and unblameably perform the sacred services for thy people, through Christ, &c."

The form used at the ordination of bishops was in these words: Grant to him, O Lord Almighty, by thy Christ, the communication of the holy spirit, &c." †

In these instances, it is clear enough that the ordainers had no idea that they possessed a power of conferring the spirit of God; they besought his influence from heaven, perfectly unconscious that it resided in their own fingers. Not a single trace can be found of prelates pretending to give God Almighty

\* Constit. Apost. lib. viii. chap. 16.

† Constit. Apost. lib. viii. chap. 5.

away, for the first twelve hundred years. Our English form of ordination, it is well known, is taken from the Roman pontifical. After all the talk, therefore, of Jesus Christ giving bishops a power to confer the Holy Spirit, their authority is derived, not from the gospel according to the evangelists, but from the gospel according to the popes.

## SECTION II.

### ON CONFIRMATION.

In the ceremony of confirmation, a bishop lays his hands upon the heads of young people, and assures them, that this holy touch is a *sign* to *certify* them of the gracious goodness of God towards them. But how the imposition of a bishop's hands can be any sign, evidence, proof, or confirmation, to any one of the divinity of the christian religion, and of his own personal saving interest in it, is a "mystery of godliness" which will require all the sagacity of his lordship to explain. It must be noted that no virtue is necessary in order to enjoy this sacred and soul-reviving sign. The only qualifications, required of candidates for confirmation, are, that they be able to "*say* the creed, the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments, answer the other questions in the short catechism," and *promise* to be very good for the future. These things being duly certified to the bishop, *without a single enquiry being made into their past conduct*, he prays,—“Almighty and everlasting God,

who hast vouchsafed to *regenerate these thy servants* by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them *forgiveness of all their sins, &c.*”—and then proceeds to lay his hands upon them, which he assures them is a *sign* of the gracious goodness of God towards them. Thus, churchmen may be pardoned, sanctified, and assured of their acceptance, without having paid any attention to the moral precepts of the gospel.

The extraordinary gifts of the spirit which followed the laying on of the hands of the apostles, were a confirmation to the first christians that their religion was of God. But what confirmation can the imposition of a bishop's hands be of the divine original of christianity, when no *sensible* influence of the spirit follows the use of the rite? If a professor of Astronomy, should undertake to demonstrate the truth of the Copernican system, by laying his hands on the heads of students, the man would be deemed fit for a strait-jacket.

The laying on of hands was performed by the apostles immediately after baptism;\* and this practice obtained in the church for many centuries; hence infants were confirmed as well as adults. “The custom ought to have been laid aside when the extraordinary gifts of the spirit ceased; and it is as ridiculous to continue it now, as it would be for bishops to stretch themselves upon dead persons, because a

\* Acts, viii. 14, 17.—xix. 5; 6.

prophet and an apostle used this ceremony in restoring the dead to life.

Confirmation was soon magnified far above baptism, and many most ridiculous ceremonies were added to it, to command the reverence of the superstitious. A compound of oil and balsam, called *chrism*, was *consecrated* by the bishop, and with this he anointed the forehead and other parts of the body. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, tells those who were baptized, that “they were first anointed in the forehead, to wipe away that shame which the first man by his transgression had contracted; and that they might now with open face behold the glory of the Lord. Then they were anointed on the ears, that they might have ears to hear the divine mysteries. After that on the nose and breast, that they might be a sweet savour unto the Lord, and being armed with the breast-plate of righteousness, might be able to withstand all the insults of the devil.” \* Baptism without all this nonsense was supposed to be incomplete; hence the author of the Constitutions represents a person who has been baptized, but not confirmed, as no better than a Jew.—He has put away the filth of the body by water, but is not purified from the pollution of the soul by the spirit †.

When dioceses were enlarged, and the pastors of the church became lord bishops, a custom obtained in many places for *presbyters* to use the unction.

\* Cyril. Catech. Myst. iii. c. 3.

† Constit. Apost. lib. vii. c. 44.

This was founded upon necessity; for the people were taught that they could not be saved without confirmation; and yet, on account of the absence of the bishop, many died without receiving it, which was a most distressing circumstance to the ignorant and superstitious. The bishops, however, reserved to themselves the sole power of making the greasy composition holy, and the presbyters applied to them before Easter for the consecrated chrism to supply the wants of their congregations.

After anointing the body with chrism, and making the sign of the cross, the bishop put his hands on the head of the candidate, and repeated this form: “I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” \*

Thus the bishop and priest, between them, regenerated and filled with the spirit their deluded votaries, and made them believe that, without this mummary, which none but the holy order could perform with due effect, they could not possibly obtain salvation. Pacianus, bishop of Barcelona, says,—“The seed of Christ, that is, the spirit of God, brings forth a new man, *by the hands of the priest*, out of the womb of the church, which is the font, faith being the bride-maid to all this. And without these three sacraments, the laver, the chrism, and the *priest*, this new birth is not effected. For by the laver sin is

\* Hanmer's Exercit. upon Confirm. p. 45. 2d edit.



purged, by the chrism the Holy Spirit is poured down upon us; and both these we obtain *by the hand and mouth of the priest*; and so the whole man is regenerated and renewed in Christ\*.

But the spirit of God is not tied to the finger ends of a bishop. The Eunuch was baptized by Philip, a deacon, and without waiting upon any apostle or bishop for confirmation, he went on his way to Ethiopia rejoicing. Cornelius and his friends, before their baptism, received the Holy Ghost directly from heaven, without the use of any ceremonies. There can be no plea of necessity in this case, from the want of a bishop, because the apostle Peter was present; and it is remarkable that, though he baptized them, he omitted the laying on of hands. If churchmen believe that any grace is imparted at confirmation, which none but a bishop can bestow, they are guilty of the most criminal neglect in not sending bishops to the East and West Indies, and to all our foreign possessions. As the diocese of London includes those places, it is humbly submitted to the bishop, whether it would not be a most apostolic action in his lordship, to pass through these regions “confirming the churches.”

The presumption of bishops in performing the ceremony of confirmation, and its pernicious influence on young people, are represented in a strong but just light by Mr Towgood, in his letters to Mr

\* Bingham's Antiq. b. xii. cap. 1. sect. 4.

White. “I pray you, Sir,” says this spirited writer, “in the name of God, inform me what warrant has the bishop to pronounce a man’s sins all forgiven, and himself regenerated by the Holy Ghost, upon no other grounds than his being able to say the short catechism, and declaring that he stands by his baptismal engagements? Will you say, that this is the christian doctrine concerning the terms of acceptance and forgiveness with God? Are good vows and resolutions, declared in the church, infallible or proper proofs of a regeneration by the Holy Ghost? Is a man’s professing that he repents, and promising that he will live godly, that actual repentance and amendment of life, which alone can ensure the divine pardon and favour? Are there not multitudes who call Christ their lord, and publicly profess to stand by their baptismal covenant, whom, however, he will reject with abhorrence at last? You will inform me, then, Sir, how the bishops, upon this mere profession and promise, presume to declare to Almighty God, and to assure the person, that he is regenerated, forgiven, and unquestionably in a state of favour with heaven !

“The expressions, you must acknowledge are couched in strong and absolute terms : nor do I find that there is any intimation that their forgiveness depends upon their care to keep, and to live up to, their baptismal engagements. No: but, though their whole life hath hitherto been scandalously corrupt, yet, upon their being able to say *the Lord’s prayer*, &c. the bishop solemnly pronounces a most absolute pardon over them, appeals to Almighty God that

he hath forgiven them all their sins, and, lest this should be too little to satisfy the doubting sinner, and appease his upbraiding conscience, he lays his hands upon his head, and certifies him, by that sign, of God's favour and goodness towards him.

“ This bishop, Sir, the multitudes, who come to be confirmed, are taught to consider as an ambassador of Christ, a successor of the apostles, and a special minister of God. When they hear, then, this sacred person so solemnly declaring that they are fully justified, pardoned, and regenerated, by the Holy Ghost, can you blame them if they believe it, and rest satisfied that their souls are in a safe and happy state. And, as full remission of sins, and the favour of God are to be had upon such easy terms, can you wonder, should you see thousands eagerly flocking from all quarters to accept it? or, that persons of very wild and profligate characters, should often thrust themselves in to partake of this benefit, and to be seen receiving upon their knees, episcopal absolution, and solemn assurances of God's favour and grace\*.

### SECTION III.

#### ON BAPTISM.

As bishops, on account of the great extent of their dioceses, cannot perform all religious services them-

\* Towgood's Dissent. p. 58, 59.

selves, they have acted wisely in granting a portion of the spirit to others, to supply their lack of service. But still every thing is efficacious which is done by the priesthood. In the office for baptism, before the ceremony is performed, the person is supposed to be graceless, the water is *sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin*, and prayer is made for the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. Immediately after the sprinkling, the congregation is informed that the "person is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's church," and God is thanked that this new convert "is *now* born again, and made an heir of everlasting salvation." When an infant has been baptized in private, and it is ascertained in the church that the ceremony was duly performed, the priest says, "I certify you, that in this case all is well done, and according to due order, concerning the baptizing of this child; who being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, *is now*, by the laver of regeneration *in baptism*, received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life." In the catechism the child is taught to say, "*in my baptism* I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Cornelius and his friends received the Holy Ghost *before* baptism, and Simon Magus continued graceless *after* it; but our priests unite the divine spirit to the water, and will allow of no regeneration before the *mystical washing*; but they certify both God and man, that as soon as the sprinkling is over, the

new creature is born, and an union with Christ is effected. The general belief of this sentiment, that the baptism of an infant is absolutely necessary to its regeneration and salvation, occasions the utmost anxiety and distress in the minds of superstitious parents, whose children die before a priest can be procured to give them the Holy Ghost and a passport to heaven. The practice formerly was to permit women, or any body, to baptize a sickly child, if a priest could not be procured in due time; and in hard labours it was usual to baptize the head of the infant before the whole delivery; but now the little ones must perish, should they die before the priest arrives, as no other person is permitted by the laws of the church to perform the ceremony.

Some ministers, in their preaching, assure the most profligate characters that they were all born again in baptism, and that they ought not to believe what enthusiastic preachers say concerning the necessity of conversion, as applicable to them. It is certain, however, that if the spiritual birth does really take place in baptism, the new creature, in most cases, soon expires; and the corpse of departed virtue turns to moral corruption. But let a man's life be what it will, he must not be permitted to doubt the saving efficacy of clerical ministrations.



## SECTION IV.

## ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

In the Lord's supper, the priest dexterously unites the body and blood of Christ to the bread and wine, which neither a deacon nor a layman is able to do. Wonderful efficacy is ascribed to these *holy mysteries*. In the rubrick for the communion of the sick, it is remarked,—“ For as much as all mortal men be subject to many sudden perils, diseases, and sicknesses, and ever uncertain what time they shall depart out of this life; therefore, to the intent they may be always *in a readiness to die*, whensoever it shall please Almighty God to call them, the curates shall, diligently, from time to time, (but especially in times of pestilence, or other infectious sickness) exhort their parishioners to the often receiving of the holy communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, &c.” Here the people are taught that partaking of the Lord's supper is a preparation for death. Many churchmen heartily believe this doctrine, and venture their salvation upon it. Hence the most notorious sinners, when about to finish their career in vice, send for a priest to give them the sacrament, and prepare them for heaven.

If the sick man should defer too long to send for his minister, the church in her charity accepts the will for the deed; and, on a mere profession of repentance and faith, his soul is restored to spiritual

health and soundness. “ But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the curate, or for lack of company to receive with him, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, the curate shall instruct him, that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and steadfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the cross for him, and shed his blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore ; he doth eat and drink the body and blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul’s health, although he do not receive the sacrament with his mouth.” Here it must be noted, that no exception is made, nor doubt expressed, in the case of the greatest profligate that ever lived. It generally happens, that those who survive, return again to their old courses like the dog to his vomit ; which shews that their repentance was insincere, their faith dead, and their thanksgiving gross hypocrisy ; yet, notwithstanding all this, had they left this world just after their confession to the priest, they would have died in the sure and certain hope of heaven. It is in consequence of a general belief in the saving efficacy of the last rites of the church, that so many abandon themselves to all sorts of vice, so long as they enjoy health and strength ; and if it be true, that God will accept of professions and sacraments as a substitute for a life of piety and virtue, they are in the right ; for who, but a fool, will live in daily acts of self-denial and flesh-

ly mortification, when he may receive from a priest, in his last moments, absolution from sin, health of soul, and a title to eternal life.

## SECTION V.

### ON ABSOLUTION.

In the office for the visitation of the sick, the absolution runs in these words: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgives thee thine offences; and, by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

There is a difference of opinion among the clergy whether the absolution be *judiciary*, or only *declarative*. The proud are for the former, and the modest few for the latter. If nothing more be meant, than that God hath given priests authority to declare, that those who repent and believe shall obtain forgiveness of sin, the sentiment could not be worse expressed than in the words of the absolution. Besides, every christian has authority from God, equally with a priest, to declare to a person who is troubled in his conscience, that if he heartily repent and believe he shall find mercy. But the absolution will not bear this mild interpretation; it is not only so worded as to favour the judicial authority of the

minister, but the church does not suffer a deacon to pronounce it, (though he is permitted in religious assemblies *to explain* the doctrines of the gospel) which is an unaccountable restriction, if there be no power of absolution *in the priest*. Bishop Sparrow rejects, with indignation, the declarative interpretation, and asserts, that “ a power barely declarative is indeed none at all; and that the apostles, and in them all priests, were made God’s vicegerents here on earth, in his name to retain and forgive sins, not *declaratively* only, but *judicially* :” adding,—“ Our holy mother, the church, hath prescribed a form of absolution in the visitation of the sick. He, then, that assents to the church of England, or believes the scriptures, or gives credit to the ancient fathers, cannot deny the priest the power of remitting sins.” And again,—“ He that would be sure of pardon, *let him seek out a priest, and make his humble confession to him* ; for God, who alone hath the prime and original right of forgiving sins, *hath delegated the priests, his judges on earth, and given them the power of absolution* ; so that they can, *in his name, forgive the sins of those that humbly confess unto them.*” \*

Our high priests found their assumed authority on the following texts: “ I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Verily I say unto you, whatso-

\* Sermon on the Power of Absolution, on John i. 9,

ever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." \*

By *the keys of the kingdom of heaven* being promised to the apostle Peter, is meant, that he should *open the gospel dispensation* to the Jews and Gentiles; which promise was fulfilled when he preached the gospel to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and to Cornelius and his friends soon afterwards. †

The power of binding and loosing, which in the first text is promised to Peter, is in the second extended to every christian community. Our Lord was speaking to the case of an offending brother, who, if he could not be persuaded of his error by private remonstrances, was to be brought before the whole church, or congregation, whose decision should be final. The binding and loosing here is the same as remitting and retaining sin in the last text. If the offending brother repented, the congregation *loosed* him—they *remitted* his sin, and were reconciled unto him; but if he remained incorrigible, they *bound* him—his sin was *retained*, and he was expelled the society. To give authority to the decisions of the church, in matters of discipline, our Lord solemnly declared, that they should be confirmed in the court of heaven. Two things must here be noted:

\* Matthew xvi. 19.—xviii. 18. John xx. 23.

† Acts ii. 10.



I. It is not the sin as it relates to God, but as it relates to men, which the church has a power of binding or loosing, retaining or remitting. “If thy brother trespass *against thee*” and will not make suitable acknowledgments, he is to be treated as an heathen man and a publican, and his sin is to be *bound* upon him \*. Now, in this sense of forgiving sin, priests have not only authority to do it, but, when a proper apology is made, it is their duty to do it. For it follows,—“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how often shall my brother *sin against me*, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven.”

II. The decrees of priests do not bind either on earth or in heaven, when they are not according to the word of God. When Peter was for binding a load of Jewish ceremonies on the Gentile converts, Paul resisted this unscriptural assumption of power, and “withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” And it is to be lamented, that the church did not, in after times, oppose the encroachments of a proud, presumptuous, and interested clergy.

The discipline of the church of Corinth was executed by the laity. They had retained the sin of the incestuous person, and cut him off from their communion. This had the desired effect; he repent-

\* Matt. xviii. 15—18.

ed, and sought absolution. The apostle exhorted them to be reconciled unto him, remarking, “ sufficient to such a man is this punishment which was inflicted of *many*. So that *ye* ought to *forgive him*, and comfort him.” \* If the absolution in this instance extended to the conscience, in the sight of God, remember it was given by the *laity*, and not by the clergy.

Every private christian has the same power to forgive a sin committed against himself, which ecclesiastics have to pardon offences committed against the church. In the Lord’s prayer, which every christian ought to use, is this petition: “ Forgive us our debts, as *we forgive* our debtors.”

No one can forgive sins committed against God but God himself. “ Who can forgive sins but God only?—It is God that justifieth.” But to cite all the texts which ascribe the justification of a sinner to the Supreme Being, would fill a volume. It will be said, however, that though it be the prerogative of the Most High to pardon sinners, yet he may, if he pleases, delegate his authority to priests. If so, then prayer and supplication should be made to priests, and not to God for forgiveness. The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, and this is assigned as the reason why the Father judgeth no man. † By parity of reason, if he hath committed the pardon of sin to the priests, it will follow that he pardoneth

\* 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

† John, v. 22.

no man. In this case, therefore, the priest, and not the Deity, is the proper object of religious worship.

Repentance and faith are necessary to obtain the favour of God, according to the whole tenor of the New Testament : the priest requires a profession of these before he gives absolution ; but he possesses no means of ascertaining to a certainty that the conditions of the new covenant have been duly performed. Can any thing be more ridiculous and presumptuous ? Is a mere saying, “ I repent,” and *repeating* the creed, that repentance and faith which obtain salvation ? When a priest absolves a person who has not performed the conditions required, he either tells a lie, and deceives a soul to its ruin ; or else, by the plenitude of his sacerdotal powers, he can “ change the truth of God into a lie,” for the infallible word hath declared, “ except ye repent, ye shall all perish. He that believeth not shall be damned.”

If God had given to priests a power to remit or retain sins committed against himself, he would have qualified them for the due exercise of this high authority, by giving them a thorough knowledge of the human heart ; and he would have provided against any wilful abuse of their power in retaining the sins of the virtuous, and remitting those of the vicious, by making them men of the most inflexible integrity. To believe that God has made the salvation or damnation of his creatures depend upon the will of ignorant and capricious ecclesiastics, is a faith worse than atheism.

The clergy are far more ready to pardon the worst of sins committed against God, than to forgive a venial trespass against themselves. A sinner may have affronted the majesty of heaven for three-score years and ten, and obtain an absolution for nothing; but what must become of the damnable heretic who dares to open his mouth, or take up his pen, against the majesty of the priesthood!

It is confessed on all hands, that till the twelfth or thirteenth century, the forms of absolution were not *indicative*,—"I absolve thee;" but deprecatory,— "Christ absolve thee." The following form of absolution is taken from the old penitential canons of the year 963. For its modesty, in the height of popery, it merits notice: "The Almighty God, who created the heaven and the earth, and every creature, have mercy upon thee, and grant thee forgiveness of all thy sins, which thou hast ever committed, from thy being made a christian to this time; through," &c.\* Nelson says, "the old way of absolution was by prayer and imposition of hands; but that was disused about the beginning of the twelfth century, and the new method introduced under those authoritative words,—I absolve thee, &c.; and, because the natural import of such a positive sentence might lead men into an opinion that the clergy assumed a power of pardoning sins, therefore it was always tempered with some softer expression, viz. I absolve thee, *in so far as it is granted to me*; or, *as far as the accusation comes from*

\* Free and Candid Disquisit. page 529.

*the penitent, &c.\** In those days popish priests were modest, in comparison of our modern *reformed* clergy!

## SECTION VI.

### ON THE BURIAL SERVICE.

It is not at all surprising, when every thing done by a priest is so full of spiritual efficacy, that all who submit to his authority should go to heaven. Accordingly we find, from the burial office, that every member of the church dies “in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.” This office is read over all indiscriminately, with the exception of infidels, suicides, and excommunicated persons. Moral character is out of the question. Though a man die with an oath upon his tongue, in a state of intoxication, or in a brothel, he is the “dear brother” of the priest, who thanks God for delivering him “out of the miseries of this sinful world;” and makes *meek* supplication to heaven “that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Christ, as our hope is this our brother doth.” Thus a churchman, on the ground of professions, which are unsupported by a single virtue, and contradicted by the worst of vices, is, through the power of the priest, justified, sanctified, and glorified!!!

\* Nelson's Rights of the Clergy, Art. Absolut.



Several curious and ingenious explications of the burial office have been given by well meaning clergymen, with a view to remove that scandal which it has generally occasioned. It may not be amiss to notice those which moderate men have thought most satisfactory.

1st, Dr Bennet says; “ It is plain from the whole tenor of this office, that it was never intended to be used at the burial of such persons as die in a state of notorious impenitence, without any appearance or profession of their return to God. So that those clergymen (if any such there can be) who read this form at the funeral of the most profligate and debauched sinners, do not only act without authority, but against the manifest design of the church. I hope, therefore, that none of my brethren will ever prostitute this excellent service to the worst of purposes, to the encouragement of vice, and the hardening of sinners; and that they will never change the whole of it into one continued and deliberate falsehood by so scandalous a misapplication.”\* But the good doctor seems to have forgotten that the 68th canon obliges the clergy to read the office over *all*, except excommunicated persons. “ No minister shall refuse or delay to bury any corpse that is brought to the church or church-yard, (convenient warning being given him thereof before) in such manner and form as is prescribed in the book of common-prayer. And if he shall refuse, except the party deceased were denounced excommunicated,

\* Free and candid Disquisit. page 132, 133.

*majori excommunicatione*, for some grievous and notorious crime, (and no man able to testify of his repentance,) he shall be suspended by the bishop of the diocese from his ministry by the space of three months."

2dly, Dr Nichols explains the matter thus: "According to the rules of christian charity, we hope for the salvation of every deceased person, who dies within the pale of the church; as thinking we cannot, without the greatest arrogance, exclude any, in our private judgment, from the common reward of christians, whom the church hath not thought fit to exclude by her public censure."\* To this Mr Peirce replied: "I am utterly ignorant what those *rules of christianity* are, which require us to *hope* thus concerning men, who were, it may be, notorious for all manner of wickedness. The spirit of God testifies, that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. How then can we hope, that such are made partakers of the eternal inheritance, provided only they died not under the church's censure? How many wicked wretches are daily buried, who, as they gave no signs of so much as a death-bed repentance, have left us no room for such a hope in their case? To require ministers to express such a hope, is as wicked, as it is absurd. Nay, if we suppose the case to be doubtful, what occasion is there to say any thing about it? But profligate wretches meet with that charity among our adversaries, which several of the furious high blades refuse to shew to

\* Defence of the Church of England, page 539.

any dissenters. Nor can it be expressed how great mischief has been done to religion, by the promiscuous use of this form in burying the dead. Men are easily hardened in their impieties, when they hear such hope is entertained of those that lived and died like themselves. If it were left to a minister's discretion to express this charitable hope of the dead he buries, or not to express it, according as he saw there was reason, it would be quite another case. But since they are required always to say the same, of all those that have been baptized, and did not die excommunicate, or by laying violent hands on themselves, we cannot oblige ourselves to conform to such a custom."\* The office does not merely express a judgment of charity respecting the *possibility* of the salvation of all churchmen, though that would be stretching the point quite far enough, but asserts the *certainly* of it in the most absolute terms: "In *sure* and *certain* hope," &c.

3dly, A few writers of less note suppose the sure and certain hope has reference merely to the resurrection of the body, without deciding any thing about the state which follows, whether happy or miserable. But this resurrection is stated in the office to be *to eternal life*; a phrase which, in the New Testament, always denotes future *happiness*, and can intend nothing else in this office; for the apostle is immediately quoted where he speaks of the bodies of believers being "fashioned like unto

\* Peirce's Vindication of the Dissenters, page 556.

Christ's glorious body," \* a privilege which is restricted to the faithful. Besides, the *ground* of this confidence determines the *nature* of it. "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his *great mercy*, to take *unto himself* the *soul* of our *dear brother* here departed, we *therefore* commit his *body* to the ground, "in sure and certain hope."

Though many pious clergymen have complained of this office, and though several applications have been made for a revision of it, nothing has been done; which proves it to be the fixed and deliberate judgment of the church, that the most profligate of her members are without doubt saved everlastingly; since it is incredible that she should be conscious of an error upon so momentous a subject, for near three hundred years, without correcting it.

After all, the dissenters ought not to press hard upon the church, for it has been recently determined, in a spiritual court, that the clergy are obliged to read this office over *them*, as well as churchmen; and it would appear ill-natured to censure that charity as excessive to friends, which is not denied even to enemies. It may also be presumed, that the decision of this case will cure the clergy of their bigotry; for it would be too ludicrous to excite any thing else than laughter, to hear a minister in the morning denouncing dissenters as damnable heretics, and to hear the same man in the afternoon, when burying one of these limbs of the devil, call him a

\* Phil. iii. 21.

dear brother, who is certainly gone to heaven, and pray *meekly* for himself and other churchmen, that their last end may be like his.

The case of suicides is singular and critical. The clergy have no power of judging of the state of their minds, but their christian burial, which turns upon this point, is determined by a jury of laymen ; so that, in fact, the salvation or damnation of these unhappy persons, in the judgment of the church, depends upon the verdict of the laity !



## ESSAY IV.

### ON LEARNING.

---

How much learning is necessary to qualify for the sacred ministry? Just so much as is necessary to acquire a knowledge of christianity; for he who understands any art or science is qualified to teach it. Thus a man who understands the art of shoe-making, can teach others to make shoes; a lawyer who is well versed in the principles of justice, the civil code of the realm, and the practice of the courts, is competent to give instructions on jurisprudence; a physician who is acquainted with anatomy and physiology, the nature, causes and symptoms of diseases, and the properties of medicines, is sufficiently learned to give lectures on the healing art; and the reason equally holds in relation to all other professions.

The question, therefore, is, *What learning is necessary to acquire a knowledge of christianity?* The clergy reply, a knowledge of the languages in which

the sacred scriptures were originally written. But this can only be true upon the supposition, that the translation does not give the sense of the original; a supposition which reflects disgrace upon the translators, as ignorant or designing men, in giving us a spurious version, and upon the present clergy, as enemies to learning and religion, in not giving us a better. When a motion is made, however, for a new translation, the clergy are loudest in the cry, that the old one is strictly just and faithful. It may therefore be safely affirmed, that by a careful and devout perusal of the bible, the christian system may be comprehended, and that, consequently, a knowledge of the dead languages is not necessary to a teacher of the science of salvation.

But it is said, admitting our translation to be a good one, yet every scholar knows, that it is impossible to give the full force and spirit of any work in a translation; and that, however well it may be executed, it must from the nature of things contain some errors. This is granted. But still it will not be denied, that the doctrines, duties, privileges, and rewards of christianity, may all be clearly made out from the authorised version, and may therefore be inculcated with effect by a minister who is ignorant of Greek and Hebrew.

It may justly be inferred from the imperfections and errors of the translation, that a critical knowledge of the originals is *useful*, though not *necessary*. But when it is considered what innumerable new trans-

lations, paraphrases, commentaries, dissertations, histories and dictionaries of the bible, we have in our own language, a man of extensive reading and good understanding, may acquire a critical knowledge of the sacred books, without studying the languages in which they were written. A dabbler in Greek and Hebrew can add nothing to our stores of biblical criticism, and possesses no advantages over a mere English scholar.

If it were supposed that a minister must be a *master* in the dead languages, the sentiment would be more fatal to the church than to the conventicle; for after all the parade of the clergy about learning, it is questionable whether there be a body of reverends in the protestant world, which contains so large a proportion of ignoramuses as are to be found in our establishment. Not one in a hundred of them has a critical knowledge of the Greek, nor one in a thousand of the Hebrew. How contemptible to hear a man boasting of his learning, who cannot deliver a discourse of twenty minutes long without book, and who cannot *read* it with as much grace and pathos as a boarding-school miss does her favourite novel!

It is pretty generally admitted, that Greek and Hebrew can contribute very little more towards clearing and illustrating the sacred text. These languages have been cultivated with so much zeal and success, and such pains have been taken to procure and collate manuscripts, that there is scarcely

any thing left for the man to do who comes after the kings that, for the last two centuries, have reigned over the world of sacred literature. The learned have now turned their attention to the Samaritan, which was the language of the Jews before the captivity; to the Arabic, from which the Hebrew is probably derived; and to the several oriental languages which bear any affinity to the Greek and Hebrew, and in which any ancient manuscripts of the scriptures are to be found. The ministers among the sectaries are labouring in this new field of action, while the principal part of the clergy are applying to the *Latin*, a language in which few works are preserved that are not full of either the debaucheries of heathenism, or the superstitions and persecutions of corrupted christianity.

There is nothing important in christianity which a man of common capacity cannot comprehend. The clergy are perpetually insisting on the necessity of a learned education in ministers, because *they have to dispense the mysteries of our holy religion*. This cant refers to baptism and the Lord's supper. Let us therefore enquire, what there is of mystery and difficulty in the administration of these sacraments. It cannot require much learning to sprinkle a little water upon a child, and say, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It must be confessed, however, that there are some mysteries in baptism, as practised in the church of England. For instance: there is something inexplicably mysterious in ask-

ing an infant, “ Wilt thou be baptized? Wilt thou obediently keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?” It would be equally proper to interrogate the baby upon other subjects, on which it could certainly give quite as much information: It might be demanded, “ Wilt thou be a soldier,—a sailor,—or a parson? Wilt thou at a proper age be married? &c.” There is no less mystery in asking the sponsor, “ Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works? Dost thou believe, &c?” If we can believe and obey by proxy, we may also be saved by proxy; for nothing more than faith and obedience. is necessary to salvation. This is certainly a very mysterious subject; but thus much is plain, that a man who can go to heaven by *proxy*, may possibly go to hell *himself*.

No person has a right voluntarily to become responsible for another, who has not the means of fulfilling the obligation. When a man, therefore, engages for the virtue of another, he ought to possess the power of making him virtuous, which is inconsistent both with free agency and the grace of God,—or else he ought to possess as much virtue himself, as will satisfy for them both, in which case the popish doctrine of works of supererogation is established, and the sale of indulgences, founded upon it, justified. But whatever mystery there may be in this business, it is certain no very great degree of learning is necessary to ask infants and their sponsors these silly questions.



The bread and wine in the Lord's supper are called *holy mysteries*. There is nothing mysterious in the celebration of the eucharist, as practised by the first christians. Our Lord did not consecrate the bread and wine when he instituted the supper, any more than the loaves and fishes when he fed the multitude; for he rendered the same thanksgiving to God on both occasions. Compare the texts:

“ And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he BLESSED, and BRAKE, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

“ And he took the seven loaves, and the fishes, and GAVE THANKS, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.” \*

“ *Jesus took the bread, and BLESSED, and BRAKE, and gave to the disciples; and said, take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and GAVE THANKS, and gave to them, saying, drink ye all of it.*” †

It surely is not necessary, that a man should have much learning to qualify himself to express gratitude to God, to hand about a little bread and wine,

\* Matthew, xiv. 19. xv. 36.

† Matthew, xxvi. 26, 27. Our translators have added the pronoun *it*—“ He blessed *it* ;” but there is no *it* in the original, and should be none in the translation; for it was not the *bread* which our Lord blessed, but *God*. When he took the cup, he *gave thanks*. If the pronoun be retained in the preceding verse, it ought not to be omitted in this, and then the reading will be, “ And he took the *cup* and gave *it* thanks,” which is making Christ an idolater.

and to desire the people to take it in remembrance of the death of Christ, and as figurative of his body and blood. But in the church of England this subject is enveloped in mystery. The priest *consecrates* the elements by a prayer; and in doing this, he must “lay his *hand* upon *all the bread*, and upon *every vessel* in which there is any wine to be consecrated.” This is a very mysterious touch;—a deacon’s hand is not sufficiently holy to perform this magical operation; some spiritual virtue must surely be infused into the sacred food, because if any of it remains, “*it shall not be carried out of the church*, but the priest, &c. shall, *immediately* after the blessing, *reverently* eat and drink the same.”

But these mysteries are explained in the catechism, where we are told, “The body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed, taken and received by the faithful *in* the Lord’s supper.” It is not the body and blood of Christ *figuratively*, or even *spiritually*, but *verily* and *indeed*, that is taken by the faithful. The only difference, therefore, between a popish and protestant priest in this affair, is, the papist *changes* the bread and wine into flesh and blood, and the protestant *unites*, after some *mysterious* manner, the flesh and blood to the bread and wine. Of the two operators, the papist is undoubtedly the most dextrous; but there is, “*verily and indeed*,” another mystery connected with this, and that is; How many bodies has Jesus Christ, if one be verily and indeed taken by each of the faithful in the Lord’s supper? We are as completely lost in

this mystery, as in the transubstantiation of the catholics. If the priest can produce no change in the bread and wine, why all this superstitious ceremony? this affectation of mystery?

In the church of Corinth, there was no minister to consecrate and give the elements, as is clear from the whole relation; for, in that case, the apostle ought to have blamed the priest, and not the people, for the irregularities of which he complained. And it ought to be noted, that though he gives directions for the due celebration of this christian festival, he says nothing about a priest presiding, which shews that his presence is not necessary.

There are certainly mysteries of godliness, as well as mysteries of iniquity; but a preacher's duty is not about mysteries, but truths clearly revealed. How the three persons of the Godhead subsist in one divine nature, and how the two natures of Christ are united in one person, are mysteries which all the learning in the world cannot explain. They who have attempted such things, have demonstrated nothing but their own folly.

Much learning is supposed to be necessary to a minister, because the arts and sciences are frequently alluded to in scripture; and such passages, it is said, cannot be explained by illiterate persons. Suppose this were true, is it necessary to explain such passages in teaching the way of salvation? Is it impossible to preach the gospel, without demonstrating

the Mosaic account of the creation to be strictly philosophical? and describing the chemical process by which Aaron's calf was reduced to powder?

There is more frequent allusion in the sacred writings to common arts and employments, than to the higher branches of science, for most of the arts in those days were in a state of infancy, and many of the sacred writers were illiterate persons; hence a Jack-of-all-trades possesses many advantages over a delicate gentleman who is ignorant of the concerns of common life.

A farmer, in preaching from, "Ye are God's husbandry," will plough up the fallow ground of the heart, destroy the weeds of sin, sow it with the word, manure it with the spirit, water it with the means of grace, and keep it clean with watchfulness; he will ripen the precious grain with the sun of righteousness, reap it with the sickle of angels, and gather it into the garner of God.—Set a young man just arrived from the university to preach from such a text, and it is ten to one but he will begin to sow among thorns; the seed of the word by this imprudence will be choked, and his expectations at the time of harvest will be disappointed. If an infidel be railing at the bible as a false book, because it represents the land of Canaan as a land flowing with milk and honey, though modern travellers inform us it is a barren wilderness,—a farmer can give him examples of land, which a few years ago was unproductive, that now yields thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold;

and will account for the difference betwixt the ancient and modern state of the soil, by shewing the influence of cultivation upon it. But a clergyman, unacquainted with agriculture, will be foiled by such objections, and will grace the triumph of infidelity. A shipwright can silence all the cavils of unbelievers against the capacity and shape of the ark.—He can demonstrate, that her dimensions were sufficiently large to contain so many animals, and provisions for them for so long a time; and that she was admirably well constructed for setting at defiance the destructive element, and proudly riding on a ruined world.—A sailor will give an interesting account of the *shipwreck* of St Paul, and the *anchor* of hope.—A weaver will preach a most affecting discourse from,—“ My days are swifter than a *weaver’s shuttle*.”

Upon these, and many other subjects, a common mechanic has much the advantage of a man who knows nothing but a few dead languages, and the arts of courtly address; discussions on the scripture allusions to arts and sciences, however, are, in general, more suitable for the press than the pulpit; and a large fund of valuable information may be collected from Harmer’s Observations, and from the fragments appended to Calmet’s Dictionary of the Bible.

A minister should be learned, it is said, to enable him to defend his religion, and convert its enemies. Piety is the best defence of christianity; hence christians are exhorted, “ by *well doing*,



to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” The christian religion contains so excellent and perfect a system of morality, and its positive institutions have so close and intimate a relation to its moral precepts, that infidels have never found much to object to in the New Testament;—the *vices* of professors and ministers have ever been their favourite topics of scandal. The French philosophers were perpetually declaiming on the superstitions and sins of the church and clergy; and without employing scarce a single argument, which would have affected the sacred books, they converted their countrymen into a nation of infidels. Religion has nothing to dread from its open enemies, when not betrayed by its pretended friends. Virtue is the sword as well as the shield of religion; with this she not only defends herself against the attacks of her foes, but also subdues them to the obedience of faith. Our Lord prayed for the union of his disciples with himself, and for their preservation from the vices of the age, that the world might *believe* and *know* that he was sent of God; and he exhorted them to let their light shine before men, that others, seeing their *good works*, might be induced to *glorify* their heavenly Father. \*

Deists are to be found principally in high life; and dissenting ministers, of course, hold little or no converse with them: hence, however necessary learning may be to fashionable divines, who have to conflict with knight-errants, it is of very little conse-

\* John xvii. 21, 22, 23. Matth. v. 16.

quence to persons who never had, and probably never will have, such spiritual foes to encounter. And with all the hard fighting against the opposers of our faith, and the skill and dexterity displayed by our clerical champions, what conquests have been made? Has half a dozen of mighty and noble infidels been added within the last century to the number of the faithful? It is generally over the bottle that our gentry discuss the merits of christianity; and is it to be expected, that a clergyman who participates in their revels, should, make any favourable impression upon their minds, when his own cheeks are reddened, and his intellects disordered by half a score bumpers? There are few preachers, however, but have read Paley, Newton, Butler, &c. and have thereby qualified themselves to support, with as much ability as most clergymen can do, the divine authority and obligation of our holy religion.

Proud and haughty mortals think themselves the only beings in the world that deserve attention. Hence the gospel of Christ must be suited to the classical taste, and limited to the comprehension of the literati: It must command the homage, without enlightening the understandings of the vulgar. The heathen systems of philosophy were founded upon metaphysical subtleties and abstract speculations, which only a few individuals of the keenest penetration and brightest genius could possibly comprehend; and, therefore, what little good there might be in them was hid from the multitude. But must

we identify christianity, in its leading principles, with paganism?

The Parent of mankind hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth; we all are partakers of one common nature, are exposed to the same temptations, and are required to practise the same virtues; the souls of the rich and learned are not more valuable in the esteem of heaven, than those of the poor and illiterate; hence we may fairly conclude, that a revelation from God must be adapted to the capacities and circumstances of men in general, since all stand in equal need of it, and all are equally interested in it. The gospel recognises the truth of these principles, and is constructed upon them.

As the bulk of mankind have neither capacity nor opportunity for making much progress in learning, the gospel is accommodated to their condition. "The poor have the gospel preached to them. God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." \* They understood our Saviour, and became converts to his doctrine: "The common people heard him gladly." † The meanness of his followers gave umbrage to the pharisees, who demanded, with a haughty and contemptuous air, "Have any of the rulers, or of the pharisees believed on him?" ‡ The plainness and simplicity of the gospel was treated with derision by the

\* Matthew xi. 5.      James ii. 5.      † Mark xii. 37.

‡ John vii. 48.

Gentile philosophers,—the preaching of the cross was to them *foolishness*. \* But the scoffs and sneers of Jewish priests and heathen sophists could not induce our Lord and his apostles to new-model the New Testament to their taste: “Jesus said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” † The apostle Paul says, “Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.” ‡

Had the christian revelation been wrapt up in mystery and obscurity, the learned might have employed their curiosity upon it, and prided themselves upon finding out the riddle; but this would have been gratifying a few at the expence of the multitude. Upon the present plan, the wise and prudent have to *stoop* to receive the gospel, and are thus taught humility as they enter into the kingdom of God. Here all men are upon a level; the rich and poor, the learned and illiterate meet together; the

\* 1 Cor. i. 23.

† Matt. xi. 25, 26.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

Lord is the Saviour of them all. The christian religion contains a few articles of faith, which furnish helps and motives to the practice of its precepts; and it is supported by miracles, prophecies, and internal characters of divinity. Its creed, morals, and evidence, are all adapted to the meanest capacities; he who runs may read, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. \*

Telling people that the gospel system is too difficult for common comprehension, has had a most pernicious effect upon the morals and manners of the lower orders of society. The obligations of religion cannot be binding upon persons who are incapable of understanding its nature; if the New Testament, therefore, be so mysterious, that the illiterate cannot make out its meaning, they have nothing to do with it; and, indeed, this is all that the greater part of them pretend to know about it. They have heard so much preaching of late concerning the mysteries of our holy religion, and the impossibility of shoemakers, carpenters, tailors, and chimney-sweepers understanding it,—all which stuff has been urged with apostolic zeal, to keep them from the tabernacle,—that multitudes of these poor deluded creatures have concluded religion is intended only for the learned, and have excused themselves for neglecting it in their lives, by saying: “O Sir! these things are *too deep* for us! We are no *skollards*,—our parson says if we make much ado about religion, it will make us *crazy*!”

\* Isaiah xxxv. 8.



What then, it is demanded, must every ignoramus, who thinks he understands religion, be allowed to turn preacher? Certainly, but the people are not obliged to honour him with their attendance; they will not listen long to the vociferations of ignorance, and pay for it into the bargain; the evil will, therefore, soon cure itself. Learning, piety, and eloquence will command the multitude; and the dull, the graceless, and the senseless, will soon be obliged to shut up shop.

It is commonly said, that the illiterate will propagate false doctrine, but there is very little danger from that quarter. It is agreed on all hands, that there is a deformity in error which is forbidding; and hence it is necessary, in order to procure it a favourable reception, that it should be artfully disguised in the garb of truth and innocence. But an ignoramus is not adequate to this task,—it requires a person of consummate abilities to introduce heresy without exciting suspicion; there is not a single article in the creed of heterodoxy, but what owes its prolonged existence to some literary character who has taken it under his protection. Error has sometimes been begotten by ignorance, but it has never long survived its birth when not nursed by learning. Instead, therefore, of lamenting that the illiterate will support heresy, it is desirable that it may never get into better hands; and then, like the *Ephemera* in the natural world, it will live only for a day.

Learning is sure to lead into the paths of error, when not under the guidance of piety. Two reasons may be assigned for this: 1st, Learning, when not humbled by religion, is *proud*. She looks above truth, which dwells with the meek and lowly, and builds a castle in the air, from which she receives the adoration of the gaping multitude, who, forgetting that it has no foundation to rest upon, are lost in astonishment at the grandeur of the edifice, and are extravagant in their praise of the abilities of the architect. Our Saviour addressed himself in thanksgiving to God, for hiding the gospel from the wise and prudent, and for revealing it unto babes, i. e. persons of an humble and teachable disposition. And, no doubt, the principal reason why the wise and prudent ones of the present day talk so much about mysteries in religion, is,—the gospel is *hid* from their eyes. But it is revealed to the meek and lowly, who learn of Christ; and, therefore, they have no mysteries in their creed.

2dly, A man of parts, without piety, finds nothing in the holy, abasing, self-denying doctrines of the gospel, to engage his affections; and he can only be induced to become a preacher of it from motives of interest. Christianity is valuable in his esteem no further than as it can be moulded into a system of priestcraft; to this object, therefore, his labours are directed. And because he perceives the New Testament condemns most strongly in priests a haughty spirit, and the love of filthy lucre, he endeavours to make the laity believe, that it is a very mysterious

book, and that a learned clergy are best qualified to explain and dispense its sacred mysteries; hence creeds and liturgies, pompous rites and ceremonies, have been provided to amuse the vulgar, and draw their attention from the sacred records. By such men, the bible is supposed to be in religion, what mercury is in medicine,—taken according to the prescriptions of a professional gentleman, it is a specific for almost every evil; but otherwise, it is always dangerous, and generally fatal, to meddle with it. Thus the people are turned from the fountain of truth, and persuaded to drink in error. A sensible writer has remarked:—"The meanest man is as much interested and concerned in the truth of religion, as the greatest priest; and though his knowledge thereof be not in all respects equally easy, yet in some respects it may be easier. For want of learning does not so much hinder the light of the layman, as worldly advantage and faction sometimes does the priests. Corruption in the church, before our Saviour, and in our Saviour's days, and ever since, has oftener begun among the greatest priests, rabbis, and bishops, than among the meanest laity."\*

As priestcraft is the only religion of corrupt ministers, so their principal concern is to support the dignity, and promote the interest of the priesthood. Popery, though a solid mass of sin and error, is the best organized system of priestcraft that ever was invented; and hence all the profligate mi-

\* True Grounds of Ecclesiastical Regimen, page 84.

nisters of the church of Rome, however learned, have always been determined enemies to reformation. It has already been noticed, that most of the bishops voted against the very first act of the reformation,—that of disowning the authority of the pope. But when the king and parliament carried that point in opposition to them, these mitred gentry, true to their principles, that half a loaf is better than no bread, all, except one, set their hands to the bill, and held their places, and thus betrayed the suppleness of their consciences.

No person is silly enough to believe, that the blustering of a wicked priest, in favour of an establishment, flows from a conviction of its apostolic constitution, and an anxious concern for the interests of religion. It is a matter of no consequence to him, whether the national creed be true or false, good or bad. It is enough for him, that he gets some hundreds, perhaps thousands, a-year by it. Demetrius and his friends roared out most lustily, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” But he explained to them the principle which inspired this holy transport:—“By this we have our gains! Our craft is in danger!”

The apostles, if we except Paul, were not learned men. It is said that though they were not favoured with a liberal education, inspiration supplied that defect; but I affirm it did *not*. Their inspiration supplied them with valuable *religious sentiments*, but did not make them learned in other things, nor

enable them to write with classic purity and elegance. Any man, by reading the New Testament with suitable dispositions, may make himself master of their sentiments, and then he has acquired all the learning which they received by inspiration; and when he has added to this, a rustic education equal to theirs, he is on a level with them in point of literature. As the advocates for a learned ministry have long deluded the vulgar upon this subject, and affirmed that illiterate men have no right to preach, unless they possess the same kind and degree of inspiration with which the apostles were favoured, and which none now pretend to, but wild enthusiasts, and frantic fanatics, I must prepare for the most formidable opposition; I shall not, therefore, attempt to fortify my opinion by arguments of my own, but by extracts from critics of the greatest eminence, whose authority will impose silence, should their reasonings fail to produce conviction.

Paul is universally acknowledged to have been the most learned among the apostles; if in any of them, therefore, we may expect to find in him *a fine writer*. Hear Dr Macknight: “Although the sermons and epistles of the apostle Paul be much superior in sentiment to the finest orations and treatises of the Greeks, many who are judges of elegant writing, I doubt not, will pronounce them inferior, both in composition and style. But though with Beza I acknowledge that Paul was capable of all the different kinds of fine writing; of the simple, the pathetic, the ironical, the vehement, and the sub-



lime; and that he hath given admirable specimens of these several kinds of eloquence in his sermons and epistles, I would not be understood to mean, that he ought, upon the whole, to be considered either as an elegant or as an eloquent writer. The method and connection of his writings are too much concealed to entitle him to these appellations; and his style in general is neither copious nor smooth. His style, upon the whole, is difficult and obscure."

The apostle despised fine writing. "As he did not follow the rules prescribed by the Greek rhetoricians in disposing the matter of his discourses, so he hath not observed their precepts in the choice of his words, the arrangement of his sentences, and the measure of his periods. That kind of speaking and writing which is more remarkable for an artificial structure of words, and a laboured smoothness of periods, than for truth of sentiment and justness of reasoning, was called by the apostle *the wisdom of speech*, 1 Cor. i. 17., and the persuasive words of human wisdom, 1 Cor. ii. 4. and was utterly disclaimed by him, 1 Cor. ii. 1. *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, nor of wisdom, declaring the testimony of God.*"

The Doctor assigns three good reasons why the apostle Paul, and the sacred writers in general, did not distinguish their productions by classic purity and elegance.

1. “ In the *first* place, a concise unadorned style in preaching and writing, though accompanied with some obscurity, was, in the apostle’s situation, preferable to the clear and elegant manner of writing practised by the Grecian orators. For as he himself tells us, it was intended by Christ, to make the world sensible that the conversion of mankind was accomplished, neither by the charms of speech, nor by the power of sounds, nor by such arguments as a vain philosophy was able to furnish; but by those great and evident miracles which accompanied the first preaching of the gospel, and by the suitableness of its doctrines to the necessities of mankind : facts, which it is of the greatest importance for us, in these later ages, to be well assured of. 1 Cor. i. 17. *Christ sent me to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of speech, that the cross of Christ might not be made ineffectual.* 1 Cor. ii. 4. *My discourse and my preaching was not with the persuasive words of human wisdom, but with the demonstration of the spirit, and of power.* 5. *That your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”*

2. “ Because it is well known to the critics, that the style in writing which is esteemed most elegant, derives its chief excellence from the frequent use of metaphors and allusions, which, though they may charm the learned, are of no value in the eye of the illiterate, who cannot apply them to their proper counterparts. Whatever delight, therefore, such latent beauties may give to those who can unfold them, to the vulgar they are little better than a picture to a

blind man; for which reason, the apostle, with great propriety, hath, for the most part, neglected them.

3. “ The sacred oracles were not designed as works of genius, to attract the admiration of the learned, nor to set before them a finished model of fine writing for their imitation; but to turn mankind from sin to God. For which purpose, the graces of a florid, or even of a melodious style, were certainly of little value, in comparison of those more solid excellencies of sentiment and language, whereby the scriptures have become the power of God unto salvation to all who believe them; and will continue to be so till the end of time. We may therefore in this, as in every other instance, affirm with the apostle, that *the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men*, (1 Cor. i. 25.) and may with understanding, ascribe to God, only wise, the glory that is due to him, on account of the admirable contrivance of his word.” \*

Dr Campbell remarks in his preface to John's gospel: “ This gospel bears marks more signal than any of them, that it is the work of an *illiterate* Jew. Upon the whole, John's style is thought to be more idiomatical, and less conformable to the syntactic order, than that of any other writer in the New Testament. There is none whose manner more bespeaks an author *destitute of the advantages which result from letters and education*.”

\* New Translation, Vol. i. Essay iii.

This author justifies the apostles in the use of plain and homely language: “ It is not to be dissembled, says he, that the sacred penmen of the New Testament have, especially in modern times, had some strenuous advocates, both among foreigners and amongst our own countrymen, who have, in my opinion, with more zeal than judgment, defended their diction, as being, when judged by the rules of grammar and rhetoric, and by the practice of the most celebrated writers in Greece, altogether pure and elegant. They seem to suspect, that to yield, even on the clearest evidence, a point of this nature, though regarding ornaments merely human and exterior, might bring dishonour on inspiration, or render it questionable. I cannot help thinking that these people must have very indistinct ideas on this subject, and be justly said to incur the reproof which Peter, on a memorable occasion, received from his master,—that *they savour more the things of men than the things of God*. Matth. xvi. 23. Are words of any kind more than arbitrary signs? And may not the same be said with justice of phrases and idioms? Is there a natural fitness in one word or phrase more than in another, for denoting the thing signified? Is not the connection between sounds and ideas merely artificial,—the result of human though tacit conventions? With regard to those rules which constitute purity in the language of any country, what are they, in effect, but the conventions which have happened to obtain among the natives, particularly those of the higher ranks? Vulgarisms, and foreign idioms, which may obtain among strangers, and

those of the lower ranks, have no more natural unfitness to convey the sense which they that use them intend to convey by them, than the terms and phrases which, in consequence of the preference given by their superiors, may be regarded as elegancies. It may be as reasonably objected against our religion, that the persons by whom it was propagated, were chosen from what men, in high life, account the dregs of the people, as that the Holy Spirit should accommodate himself to the language of those who were actually chosen. Nay, language as well as dress, being in fact, no more than a species or mode, it may with as good reason be maintained that the ambassadors whom Christ sent for promulgating his doctrine, should have been habited like gentlemen, and men of fashion, as that they should have spoken the dialect of such. Splendid style had no more connection with the purpose of their mission than splendid apparel. The cloth which they wore, how coarse soever, answered all the essential purposes of cloathing; the same may be said of the language which they spoke. And if it be argued, that good language would create greater respect to their persons, and closer attention to what they said, and consequently would contribute to its making a deeper impression; as much may be affirmed, with truth, of a genteel appearance both of person and dress. Nothing serves more powerfully to quash curiosity and expectation, and consequently to destroy attention, than such an external figure as generally accompanies poverty and ignorance, and suggests a total want of the advantages of educa-



tion, and more especially, of that indispensable advantage which the fashionable world calls *seeing good company*.

“ But these very disadvantages, or defects, both in speech and in outward figure, are assigned, by the inspired writers, as the reasons of God’s preference, whose thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways his ways. Paul argues, that the success of the preachers of the gospel, in spite of the absence of those accomplishments in language then so highly valued, was an evidence of the divine power and energy, with which their ministry was accompanied. He did not address them, he tells us, 1 Cor. i. 17. *with the wisdom of words*—with artificial periods and a studied elocution, *lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect*; lest to human eloquence that success should be ascribed, which ought to be attributed to the divinity of the doctrine, and the agency of the spirit, in the miracles wrought in support of it. There is hardly any sentiment which he is at greater pains to enforce. He *used none of the enticing, or persuasive words of man’s wisdom*. Wherefore?—*That their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. Should I ask, what was the reason why our Lord Jesus Christ chose for the instruments of that most amazing revolution in the religious systems of mankind, men perfectly illiterate, and taken out of the lowest class of the people? your answer to this will serve equally for an answer to that other question—why did the Holy Spirit chuse to deliver such import-

ant truths in the barbarous idiom of a few obscure Galileans, and not in the politer and more harmonious strains of Grecian eloquence? I repeat it, the answer to both questions is the same—That it might appear, beyond contradiction, that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of man.

“ Can it be accounted more strange that the Holy Spirit should, by the prophet Amos, address us in the style of a shepherd, and by Daniel, in that of a courtier, than that by the one he should speak to us in Hebrew, and by the other in Chaldee? It is as reasonable to think, that the spirit of God would accommodate himself to the phraseology and diction, as to the tone of voice and pronunciation, of those whom he was pleased to enlighten, for it cannot be denied, that the pronunciation of one person in uttering a prophecy, might be more articulate, more audible, and more affecting, than that of another—in like manner as one style has more harmony, elegance, and perspicuity than another.” \*

If the writings of the apostles, considered in a literary point of view, were bad, their extempore discourses must have been worse; because all men who can write at all, can write better than they can speak. The Holy Spirit suggested religious truth to their minds, but left them to publish that truth to the world in their own proper style of speaking and writing. Had he suggested the very words also in

which that truth should be conveyed to others, no doubt the language would have been good, and the style uniform. That system of religious truth which the apostles received from the Holy Ghost, we have received from their writings; any man, therefore, who can read, may soon acquire all that learning for which they were indebted to inspiration.

During the two first centuries, the christian ministers in general were illiterate men: "We may here remark, says Mosheim, in general, that the apostolic fathers, and the other writers, who, in the infancy of the church, employed their pens in the cause of christianity, were neither remarkable for their learning, nor their eloquence. On the contrary, they express the most pious and admirable sentiments in the plainest and most illiterate style. This indeed, is rather a matter of honour, than of reproach to the christian cause; since we see, from the conversion of a great part of mankind to the gospel by the ministry of weak and illiterate men, that the progress of christianity is not to be attributed to human means, but to a divine power." \*

"The method of teaching the sacred doctrines of religion, was at this time, most simple, far removed from all the subtle rules of philosophy, and all the precepts of human art. This appears abundantly; not only in the writings of the apostles, but also in all those of the second century, which have survived

\* Eccles. Hist. cent. i. part. 2. chap. ii. sect. 22.

the ruins of time. Neither did the apostles, or their disciples, ever think of collecting into a regular system the principal doctrines of the christian religion, or of demonstrating them in a scientific or geometrical order. The beautiful and candid simplicity of these early ages, rendered such philosophical niceties unnecessary; and the great study of those who embraced the gospel, was rather to express its divine influence in their dispositions and actions, than to examine its doctrines with an excessive curiosity, or to explain them by the rules of human wisdom." \*

The same historian remarks, that, in the second century, "The christian system, as it was hitherto taught, preserved its native and beautiful simplicity, and was comprehended in a small number of articles. The public teachers inculcated no other doctrines than those that are contained in what is commonly called the *Apostles' Creed*: and, in the method of illustrating them, all vain subtleties, all mysterious researches, every thing that was beyond the reach of common capacities, were carefully avoided. This will by no means appear surprising to those who consider, that, at this time, there was not the least controversy about those capital doctrines of christianity, which were afterwards so keenly debated in the church; and who reflect, that the bishops of these primitive times were, for the most part, *plain and illiterate men*, remarkable rather for their piety and zeal, than for their learning and eloquence.

\* Mosheim, cent. i. part. 2. chap. iii. sect. 5.

“ This venerable simplicity was not, indeed, of a long duration; its beauty was gradually effaced by the laborious efforts of human learning, and the dark subtleties of imaginary science. Acute researches were employed upon several religious subjects, concerning which ingenious decisions were pronounced; and, what was worst of all, several tenets of a chimerical philosophy were imprudently incorporated into the christian system.” \*

In the third century, “ the famous question concerning the excellence and utility of human learning was debated with great warmth among the christians; and the contending parties in this controversy, seemed hitherto of equal force in point of numbers, or nearly so. Many recommended the study of philosophy, and an acquaintance with the Greek and Roman literature; while others maintained, that these were pernicious to the interests of genuine christianity, and the progress of true piety. The cause of letters and philosophy triumphed, however, by degrees; and those who wished well to them, gained ground more and more, till at length the superiority was manifestly decided in their favour.” †

How did these learned gentry explain christianity?—“ The christian doctors who had applied themselves to the study of letters and philosophy, soon abandoned the frequented paths, and struck

\* Mosheim, cent. ii part 2. chap. iii. sect. 1, 2.

† Ibid. cent. iii. part 2. chap. i. sect. 5.



out into the devious wilds of fancy. The Egyptians distinguished themselves in this new method of explaining the truth. They looked upon it as a noble and glorious task, to bring the doctrines of celestial wisdom into a certain subjection to the precepts of their philosophy, and to make deep and profound researches into the intimate nature of those truths which the divine Saviour had delivered to his disciples. Origen was at the head of this speculative tribe. This great man, enchanted by the charms of the Platonic philosophy, set it up as the test of all religion, and imagined that the reasons of each doctrine were to be found in that favourite philosophy, and their nature and extent to be determined by it. It must be confessed, that he handled this matter with modesty and with caution; but he still gave an example to his disciples, the abuse of which, could not fail to be pernicious, and under the authority of which, they would naturally indulge themselves without restraint in every wanton fancy. And so, indeed, the case was, for the disciples of Origen, breaking forth from the limits fixed by their master, interpreted, in the most licentious manner, the divine truths of religion according to the tenor of the Platonic philosophy. From these teachers the philosophical, or *scholastic theology*, as it is called, derives its origin.” \*

How did they defend christianity? “ The methods now used of defending christianity, and attacking judaism and idolatry, degenerated much from the

\* Mosheim, cent. iii. part 2. chap. iii. sect. 1.

primitive simplicity, and the true rule of controversy. The christian doctors who had been educated in the schools of the rhetoricians and sophists, rashly employed the arts and evasions of their subtile masters in the service of christianity; and, intent only upon defeating the enemy, they were too little attentive to the means of victory, indifferent whether they acquired it by artifice or plain dealing. This method of disputing, which the ancients called *oconomical*, and which had victory for its object, rather than truth, was in consequence of the prevailing taste for rhetoric and sophistry almost universally approved." \*

Let the advocates for the necessity of human learning in ministers of the gospel, look at the above facts and be humbled. During the most pure and prosperous period of the church, its ministers were illiterate. When a learned ministry came into fashion, it was employed in corrupting the simplicity, and sullyng the purity of christian doctrine and manners.

God made choice of illiterate men to propagate the christian faith, that the glory of their success might be attributed to his co-operation. And when churchmen have to contend with infidels, they employ this argument in a triumphant manner. But when uneducated men *now* turn many to righteousness, *their* success is ascribed to the devil, to novelty,

\* Mosheim, cent. iii. p. 2. chap. iii. sect. 10.

to ranterism, or to any thing rather than a divine influence !

The introduction of human learning into the church of Christ, led its ministers to imitate the heathen orators, in a pompous enunciation of the subject of discourse, and the method of handling it ; in an extravagant profusion of figure and metaphor for the sake of ornament ; and in nicely adjusted and well turned periods, to give ease and grace to the whole composition. This new way of preaching soon became general, for the following reasons :

1st, It encouraged *idleness*. It is much easier to select and put together a few fine phrases, than to furnish valuable matter. Upon the new plan it was quite unimportant, whether the thoughts were vigorous or feeble,—they were lost in the language ;—nature was convulsed, and the earth groaned to her centre, whether the preacher was describing the death of an insect, or the dissolution of the universe.

2dly, It encouraged *pride*. The preacher was admired and almost adored. If he only delivered unintelligible jargon, he had the reputation of being learned, because he was not understood ; and he felt all the self-importance and self-complacency of conscious superiority. The general prevalence of this sort of preaching was the triumph of learning over common sense, and not over ignorance.

The reader will be struck with the coincidence betwixt the preaching of these innovators and that of modern divines. The subject is pompously announced,—“ we shall first prove this point, and secondly, that. To establish the first particular, we shall call your attention to three things. And, first,” &c. The discourse is decked out with the most splendid imagery, and set off with a few scraps of Latin from some heathen moralist or poet. The tone and gesture of the preacher are in unison with his sermon, and shew that his object is not to convert his hearers, but to gain their admiration: their business, therefore, is to see how he acquits himself, and when the service is over they observe one to another,—“ A fine man! A most excellent discourse! I dare say he has been *college-bred*!—O neighbour Clod, can you let me have a bushel of oats for my horse?—” Thus the fine man and his fine discourse are dismissed; for when no plain and pointed address is made to the conscience, the heart remains unaffected.

The primitive preachers gave all the riches of the kingdom of God in unadorned language; their discourses were treasures in earthen vessels; their object was not to please but to profit their hearers, not to exalt themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord; they sent their auditors away, not praising the preachers, but repenting of their sins, and stedfastly purposing to lead a new life. The bishops, when not railing against enthusiasts, will sometimes advise the clergy to study simplicity and perspicuity of

style, that the poor may enjoy the benefit of their ministrations; but this is seldom attended to, for mental imbecility and vanity are both on the side of pomposity, while the grace of God and a vigorous intellect are necessary to enable a minister to conform to the primitive pattern.

It is freely admitted, however, that learning may be useful to a pious minister, though it is not necessary to a profitable discharge of his duties. On a review, it will appear, that literature has done more harm than good in the church. If it be said that the mischief has been owing to the bad hands into which it has fallen, I reply, that there is still danger lest it should injure the cause it is intended to support; on which account we should be cautious not to over-rate its importance.

But, admitting learning to be of all the importance that many pretend, what right have the clergy of the church of England, to speak contemptuously of the literary attainments of the ministers among the sectaries? A very great number of the officiating clergy never saw an university, and, of course, possess no advantages of education superior to their dissenting brethren. Many of those who visit Cambridge and Oxford pay but little attention to their books, and the few that are industrious read more heathen than christian authors; hence the best educated among them possess but few qualifications for the ministry of the gospel. At the academies of the dissenters the young gentlemen are kept



to their books, and every branch of their education, has reference to their future destination; hence, in general, they have more solid christian learning than churchmen. Add to this, that many of the clergy, after having finished their education, seldom apply to their books, but spend their time in hunting, shooting, card-playing, &c. while dissenting ministers are generally shut up in their studies for several hours every day, and it can no longer be problematical which has the advantage in point of literature.

Though many of the itinerant preachers among the Wesleyan methodists, commence their career with few other attainments than those of a purely religious nature, yet most of them soon rise to literary eminence. The itinerants are selected from among the local preachers, and many of these are men of parts as well as piety. If an uneducated man, therefore, did not possess very superior natural abilities, he could not attain to that distinction among his brethren, which is necessary to obtain an appointment to a more extensive field of action. This man is put under the care of a senior who superintends his studies, and his progress in learning is astonishing; hence it is, that a youth taken from the plough-tail soon rises superior to his calumniators.

The societies of the sectaries are so constituted, that all the talent they possess is called into action, and the most honourable and lucrative situations among them are at the command of superior abilities; here is a stimulus to exertion! The church is

the converse of all this. It is become proverbial, and certainly has much truth in it, that a gentleman who has several sons, will select the greatest dunce and send him to college to make him a parson. Great abilities are not necessary to secure the best situations in the church. Reading and writing are sufficient to qualify a man to discharge clerical duties. To obtain a living, he must dance attendance on patrons; and to obtain a bishoprick, let him “preach before royalty.” Where is the wonder, when these things are considered, that the conventicle should possess more literature than the church?

“Men in general,” says Mr Wesley, “are under a great mistake with regard to what is called *the learned world*. They do not know, they cannot easily imagine, how little learning there is among them. I do not speak of abstruse learning, but what all divines, at least of any note, are supposed to have, viz. the knowledge of the tongues, at least, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and of the common arts and sciences.

“How few men of learning, so called, understand Hebrew? even so far as to read a plain chapter in Genesis? Nay, how few understand Greek? Make an easy experiment. Desire that grave man who is urging this objection, only to tell you the English of the first paragraph that occurs in one of Plato’s Dialogues? I am afraid we may go farther still. How few understand Latin? Give one of them an epistle of Tully, and see how readily he will

explain it without his dictionary? If he can hobble through that, 'tis odds but a Georgick in Virgil, or a Satire of Persius sets him fast.

“ And with regard to the arts and sciences, how few understand so much as the general principles of Logic? Can one in ten of the clergy, or of the masters of arts in either university, when an argument is brought, tell you even the mood and figure wherein it is proposed, or complete an Enthymeme? Can one in ten of them demonstrate a problem or theorem in Euclid's Elements? Or define the common terms used in Metaphysics? Or intelligibly explain the first principles of it? Why then will they pretend to that learning, which they are conscious to themselves they have not.”\*

As to any display of learning by the clergy in public prayer, that is out of the question: all the learning exhibited, is a bare ability to read. And as to the liturgy itself, however it may be admired for the devotional spirit which runs through it, no man of taste will commit himself so far as to affect to applaud it for the elegance of its composition. Numerous examples of vulgarity might be given. Churchmen supplicate victory over the great enemy of their salvation, in such terms as these:—“ Beat down Satan under our feet.” Had these words not been in the liturgy, and had a Methodist preacher used them in the meeting, it would soon have been published in the newspapers, that “ an enthusiast,

\* Wesley's Appeals, part iii. page 252, 253.

in the heat of his devotions, conceived of the Supreme Being as engaged in pugilistic warfare with his sable majesty, and piously besought the Almighty *to knock the devil down.*"

It is difficult to conceive how a churchman has disposed of his modesty, when he has the assurance to call the extempore prayers of the methodists enthusiastic rant. When did a company of fanatics at the meeting, rave one against another in such language as the following: "We beseech thee to hear us good Lord! Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us! Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us! O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace! O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us! O Christ hear us! O Christ hear us! Lord have mercy upon us! Lord have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us! Lord have mercy upon us! Lord have mercy upon us!!!!" This language indicates a state of feeling bordering on distraction; it is abominably hypocritical when used by a cold frozen-hearted formalist; it cannot suit the states of a whole congregation; and the greatest extravagances of methodism may be pronounced sober and rational when compared with it.

As to preaching, it must require greater abilities to deliver a discourse extempore, than to read it; in the pulpit, therefore, a dissenter appears to greater advantage than a churchman. Besides, when a clergyman happens to read a decent sermon,

he has very little credit of it; for there are so many advertisements in the papers, of sets of fashionable discourses for the accommodation of the idle, that it is often shrewdly suspected he did not come honestly by it. That dissenters preach much the best sermons, is proved by their getting much the largest congregations. People in general have a partiality for the church, and run in crowds to it when the pulpit is occupied by a man of abilities; but this is seldom the case, and hence the general complaint, that the conventicle is filled and the church deserted.

Objection 1. The dissenters are followed, not because they are learned, but because they pretend to superior sanctity, and thereby impose upon and delude the ignorant.

Dissenters do not, and cannot, make greater professions than churchmen. Is a dissenter inspired? A churchman is "moved by the Holy Ghost." Is the society constituted according to the institutions of Christ? "The church of England is the most pure and apostolical church in Christendom." Do dissenters promise great spiritual helps? Churchmen are all pardoned and regenerated in baptism; they receive a sign of the divine favour from the bishop in confirmation, and a pledge of it in the Lord's supper; they receive absolution from all their sins, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, when sick; and, no matter what their lives have been, they all die "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." If the people,



therefore, were guided by professions and promises, our good and venerable old mother would not have to weep over one lost or disobedient son.

Objection 2. The dissenters draw people from the church by railing against the clergy.

Let facts speak upon this subject. Look over the monthly catalogues of new publications, for many years past, and to one work written against the establishment, you will find, perhaps, fifty written against the different sects. At the meeting you will seldom hear the church mentioned, except to cite with approbation her articles and homilies. But go and hear the clergy: It is no matter whether the preacher be *evangelical* or *rational* in his creed, good or bad in his conduct, he must have a blow at methodism. If railing, therefore, is to carry the day, the meeting may be shut up immediately,—the dissenters stand no better chance in contending with churchmen, than Michael did in disputing with the devil. Sterne has wittily remarked, that the reason why he dare not bring a railing accusation was,—had they got to railing, Beelzebub would have been more than a match for the archangel.

Objection 3. They are generally the poor and ignorant who are seduced from the church, and these are not qualified to judge of the abilities of the clergy.

This objection was urged against our Lord: “This people who know not the law are cursed.” If the

seceders from the church are so ignorant that they cannot appreciate the merits of the clergy, what benefit have they derived from a pretended learned ministry? Whose business was it to have made them wiser? At the meeting they are both instructed and reformed, and this shews who are the best preachers. But though those who leave the church are generally ignorant, which is not much to the credit of the clergy,—yet they are not the *most* ignorant of churchmen. The poor miserable creatures, clothed in rags, and sunk in vice, who are only about one degree removed from the savage state, are stanch friends of the church. Whenever an army has been raised to defend the hierarchy, the troops have been of this description. The lowest of the rabble have been collected, made drunk, marched to the meeting, and set on by the champions of orthodoxy, to huzza, curse and swear, pelt stones and rotten eggs, break windows, and wound peaceable worshippers, in defence of an apostolic church and learned clergy, to the glory of God, and the honour of our most excellent establishment.

Objection 4. It is not by learning that the people have been drawn from the church, but by violent vociferation, and the most alarming and unnatural gesticulation,—such as brawling damnation in their ears, smiting with the hand, stamping with the foot, &c. &c. &c.

Indeed ! And has all the sober and learned instructions of the clergy come to this ! A man may

sit at their feet for years, and be wise in all the learning of the church; but, it seems, the moment he hears the voice of an enthusiast, his brains run round like a whirligig; he sees visions, dreams dreams, feels inspired, and is ready for a strait jacket! If such be the effect, some people will suspect, that he was more than half cracked before the methodist began to operate upon him. No sensible man can be moved to any thing but pity or contempt by the ravings of ignorance, and, therefore, none but fools can be gained by it: and the great abilities of the clergy are employed to very little purpose, if the most extravagant of fanatics can produce the greatest defection from the church.

If the clergy seriously believe that ranterism is so wonderfully successful, it may merit their consideration, whether it would not be a measure of prudence to meet the devil upon his own ground, and fight him with his own weapons. From the specimens some of them have given, there is reason to believe that they would soon become proficient in this mode of warfare; for, though sufficiently dull upon common topics, when they treat upon enthusiasm, fanaticism, &c. the wildness of their stare, and the extravagance of their language, are sufficient to inspire with alarm and terror minds the most inert and stoical.

There are circumstances which betray a disposition in some of the clergy not very favourable to learning. Old Lord Halifax told Dr Echard, that, in his book, *Of the Contempt of the Clergy*, he had

not hit upon the true reason of it, viz. *the knowledge of the laity*. To which the Doctor readily replied :—“ God be thanked, there is ignorance enough still among the laity, to support the authority of the clergy.”\* The archbishop of Canterbury thought Lord Sidmouth’s bill would promote the respectability of the dissenters, by keeping ignorant persons out of the ministry. If the clergy really wish the teachers among the different sects to become a learned body of men, why shut them out of the universities? They have long complained, that the terms of admission to these seats of learning, are contrary to their consciences, and imposed with a view to their exclusion. When obstacles are thrown in the way of their education, and their supposed want of it made the pretence for abridging their religious privileges by acts of parliament, it is easy to see that their enemies are contriving, not how to promote their respectability, but their destruction :—It is like first cutting off a man’s legs, and then knocking out his brains because he cannot walk.

The Lancasterian system of education, which is founded upon the most liberal principles, and calculated to banish ignorance out of the land, has had no enemies to encounter but the clergy; and their opposition has been upon church principles. That the state is under no apprehension is certain, for Lancaster obtained the approbation and patronage of his majesty, and the royal family, and the principal of the nobility. When the clergy saw that

\* Rights of the Christian Church, p. 268.

- their senseless clamour could not prevail against the good sense of the nation, they set up rival schools, founded upon sectarian principles, which exclude the children of dissenters.

Thus, those who affect to pity our ignorance, and would provide against the effects of it by legislative acts, shut us out of their national schools and universities !

Even the Bible society, which bids fair to illuminate and convert the world, has met with no open and avowed enemies of any consequence, except the clergy, whose *church is in danger*, in their own apprehension, from the circulation of the sacred scriptures, when unaccompanied by a prayer-book.

That boasted learning of the clergy produces no practical effect, if we may judge of other dioceses by the diocese of Durham : Witness the following advertisement, which appeared in the Newcastle papers.

“ At a Meeting of the CLERGY of the diocese of Durham, held at Newcastle upon Tyne, on Thursday, the 5th day of September 1811.

“ The Rev. the Archdeacon of Durham in the Chair,

“ It was resolved,

“ 1st, That ignorance of religion, and a consequent disregard of its awful sanctions, may be reckon-



ed among the chief causes of that profligacy which justly excites universal alarm.

“*2dly*, That an increased attention to the religious education of all the classes of society, and most particularly of the infant poor, is the only remedy that can be applied to this evil, with any hope of bringing about a permanent and effectual reformation.” They then proceed to recommend the institution of schools upon Dr Bell’s plan, as the remedy for the evil of which they complain.

What a sermon would the *shaver* have preached from such a text as this ! That the education of the poor upon Dr. Bell’s plan, might be one means of bringing about a reformation of manners, may be admitted ; but that it is the ONLY method which can be employed with ANY hope of success, is very surprising ! It seems to follow as a necessary corollary, that they have *no hope* of producing *any real or lasting* good by their praying and preaching. With what conscience can these holy alarmists share among themselves a yearly revenue of about £.200,000, for teaching morality, when, according to their own confession, they cannot persuade the people to practise it. A physician who should continue to attend his patients merely to swell his bill, after he had lost all hopes of doing them any good, would deserve public contempt.

Observe, reader,—This opinion of the inefficacy of their ministrations is not expressed by a solitary

individual, but by the clergy of a whole diocese. It could not escape as an inadvertency, because they were convened for the express purpose of taking into consideration the state of morals in the diocese, and the above is given, after the strictest scrutiny, as their deliberate judgment.

There are a few words in this advertisement of ambiguous import. The profligacy complained of, is stated to have excited *universal alarm*. The alarmists, it is presumed, are not to be identified with the profligates; and if *all* are terrified at sin, who are the sinners? If we take the uneducated poor to be the profligates intended, then we may suppose the clergy, and the higher orders of the laity, to be the persons seized with this panic. But why are their fears excited at the vices of the lower orders of society? Is it not notorious, to speak modestly, that the poor are kept in countenance by the example of the rich? If this alarm be about the future consequences of immorality, it may justly be retorted, “Weep not for us, but weep for yourselves.” If the effects of vice upon civil society be dreaded, the clergy ought not to oppose the exertions of those who have turned thousands to righteousness, when, by their tacit confession, their own labours can avail nothing towards the restoration of moral order.

It is an old and just observation, that truth is mighty and will prevail. Religious truth, it has been shewn, may be understood with ease; it may, therefore, be explained and defended without difficulty.

I never knew a man, however great his parts, engage in controversy from a conviction of his being in the right, who did not place more dependence upon the goodness of his cause, than upon the splendour of his abilities. It is astonishing to see how an unlettered person, with truth on his side, will foil an opponent of the greatest talents. To instance only in one particular. The clergy generally commence their attack against the Methodists on the subject of inspiration. They endeavour to persuade people that inspiration has ceased since the days of the apostles, and that the Methodists are enthusiasts and fanatics for pretending to it. There is not an old woman among them but can reply:—"Did not you, Sir, profess to be moved by the Holy Ghost, when you received priest's orders? Do not you pray in your synagogues every sabbath-day:—"Take not thy Holy Spirit from us—Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit—Send down upon all bishops and curates, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful spirit of thy grace.' The Methodists do not pretend to more inspiration than this; the charge, therefore, of enthusiasm and fanaticism, attaches as much to you as to them. If inspiration, as you pretend, has ceased, the Methodists though mistaken, are sincere; whereas you are playing the hypocrite, and sinning with your eyes wide open." No advantages of education can avail any thing in so plain a case; and upon this ground, where so many laurels have been won, the feeblest stripling in the ranks of methodism, will fearlessly encounter the greatest Goliath of the

church. Let truth only have *fair play*, and with the most trifling aid from literature, she will soon bring down to the ground the Babel of error, though it be supported by all the learning in the world.

If the church of England be, as the clergy say, the most pure and apostolic church in Christendom, and her ministers the most virtuous and learned body of men in the world; if the churches of dissenters be founded in error, and their ministers ignoramus, why are the clergy perpetually roaring, *The church is in danger!* It always affords me much amusement to hear a visitation sermon. In the former part of the discourse the party are flattered for their parts and piety, and the church adored, as built upon a rock, enjoying the divine protection, and bidding an insulting defiance to the gates of hell. By and bye, however, my ears are stunned with a cry,—*the church is in danger!* Gracious heavens! I have said to myself, what is the matter! Has her God forsaken her! It is discovered, that this impregnable fortress is tottering upon a sandy foundation! What gigantic foe has made his appearance and menaced her destruction! I listen with attention and anxious expectations, and at last gather from the incoherent harangue, that a few noisy creatures without arms or sense, are led on by the prince of darkness to storm the church. More astonishing still! I only reply to all such orators:—Is not God more than a match for the devil? Is not learning able to cope with ignorance? If you take the affirmative, you may dismiss your fears; if the nega-

tive, you give error and ignorance the advantage of truth and learning, and thereby make a liberal education of no value to a minister.

It is sometimes said, to the praise of the clergy, that during the dark ages, the little learning which was preserved in the world, was to be found principally in monasteries and religious establishments, among the sacred orders. The fact is not denied: But what was the reason? Was it not a favourite tenet of the church, that ignorance is the mother of devotion? Did not the clergy, on this very principle, keep the people as ignorant as possible? And after they had introduced universal darkness among the laity, is it much to their credit that they preserved a few glimmerings of light among themselves, by which they might *profitably* practise their impositions on the deluded vulgar?

Much confusion has prevailed on the subject of this essay, by not distinguishing betwixt the learning which is immediately related to christianity, and that which is unconnected with it. A man who understands jurisprudence is entitled to the appellation of *learned gentleman*; but he is no more qualified by his legal knowledge to teach christianity, than to give lectures on agriculture. That sort of learning which serves to explain the scriptures, ought to be studied by a minister; but that which is foreign to his profession may very well be dispensed with:—we do not deem a man unqualified to teach music, merely because he is ignorant of Newton's theory of colours.



As christian ministers, the greater part of the learning of the clergy is of no use to them at all.

By learning Latin they become acquainted with the heathen moralists; but this does not assist them either to explain or enforce christian precepts. In many instances the lax morality of the old philosophers has been recommended from our pulpits, instead of the pure and sublime virtue of the gospel; and it has been enforced by considerations gathered from the Pagan writers, such as, the nature and fitness of things, the beauty of virtue, and deformity of vice, the pleasures of a good life, and miseries of a bad one; while the scriptural principles and motives of obedience have been lost sight of, such as, the love of God, the death of Christ, the aids and comforts of the Holy Ghost, and future rewards and punishments.

The mathematics form a principal branch of education at our universities. When a young man has demonstrated every proposition of Euclid, he has not proved one doctrine or duty of christianity. Astronomy should be understood by sailors, and makers of almanacs, but it is of very little use to a christian minister; his business is not with the laws of the heavenly bodies, but the moral government of God; it is not to trace the motions of planets and comets through the heavens, but to direct the motions of men on a new and living way to eternal felicity. Algebra will assist us in bringing to light

hidden quantities, but it will afford us no aid in developing the mysteries of our holy religion.

The caution of the apostle:—"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy," is as necessary now as ever. The modern method of philosophising has made more fools and infidels than christians. The cant about the laws of nature, and the works of nature, which is now generally adopted, is the invention of atheists to explain the phenomena of creation and providence, without any reference to the Supreme Being. Nature, they say, has contrived this, and done that. But what is this nature that is so full of wisdom and energy? Is it a real being, or a nonentity? If the former, wherein does it differ from a divinity? If the latter, how can it either think or act at all?

Not a few christians have learned to philosophise away Divine Providence. The world, it is pretended, is governed by general laws which were made at the creation, when a force was impressed upon them sufficient to keep them in perpetual operation till the end of time. Hence the idea of a particular providence is ridiculed by many clergymen, as well as by deists and atheists. Such a representation may very well suit an epicurian deity, whose happiness consists in idleness. At night heat your oven, and put in your dough; you may go to bed and sleep sound; it requires no superintendence; by the regular operation of the laws of nature, the bread will be sufficiently baked by morning. An admir-

able scheme of providence for a sleepy god ! If it would not be deemed too presumptuous, I would ask these dogmatizers, Whether it required a fatiguing exertion of deity to create the world ? and if not, How it can disturb his repose, to be perpetually employed in the government of it ? If every thing was contrived and fitted beforehand, what is that force which the Almighty, in the beginning, impressed upon his laws, to keep them in perpetual operation ? Did he detach his omnipotence from himself, and hang it, like a clock weight, to the wheels of nature to prevent their standing still ? If God never specially interferes, but has left the laws of nature to regulate every thing, I should be glad to know what law of nature inspired holy men to write the sacred volume ? and whether it would not be more philosophical, in time of need, to pray to the laws of nature, than to God ? I am very much afraid that this new scheme of providence would deprive us of religion, the bible, and the prime perfections of deity.

If the studies of ministers were directed to subjects immediately connected with the duties of their profession, no man could say more warmly than myself, “ Make them as learned as possible.” But to call that sort of learning a qualification for the ministry, which neither improves our knowledge of the doctrines of christianity, nor promotes our practice of its precepts, is as absurd as to affirm, that a man who has only learned to make a cart wheel, is qualified to make a watch.

Many people speak on the subject of the learning of the clergy, as though the nation would be in danger of relapsing into a state of barbarism, if the ministers of religion were not profoundly versed in all the arts and sciences. How ridiculous is this ! Do people go to church to learn arts and sciences ? Are they there instructed in mechanics, geography, history, astronomy, drawing, music, &c. If the clergy could teach any thing in the pulpit besides religion, it would surely be oratory ; but their practice of *reading* is inconsistent with the grace and energy of an accomplished speaker ; hence the young gentlemen, who are ambitious of shining in that department, attend at the bar and the senate, rather than at the church, for examples of rhetorical skill. Those who are interested in the arts and sciences will cultivate them, and carry them on towards perfection, whether the clergy know any thing or nothing about them ; and it is to these persons we owe most of the great improvements made in them, of which we so justly boast.

A good judge, on the subjects of science and learning in general, has observed :—“ Without entering into an invidious and particular examination of the subject, we may cursorily observe, that the public has not, of late at least, been indebted for the greatest improvements in science and learning, to all the doctors, both the proctors, nor to all the heads of colleges and halls laid together. That populous university, London, and that region of literary labour, Scotland, have seized every palm of

scholastic honour, and left the sons of Oxford and Cambridge, to enjoy substantial comforts in the smoke of the common or combination room. The bursars' books are the only manuscripts of any value produced in many colleges; and the sweets of pensions, exhibitions, fines, fellowships, and petty offices, the chief objects of academical pursuits." He goes on to state, that though every candidate for a degree "is obliged to be examined in the whole circle of the sciences by three masters of arts," yet the fact is, that "the greatest dunce usually gets his *testimonium* signed with as much ease and credit, as the finest genius. The poor young man to be examined in the sciences often knows no more of them than his bedmaker, and the masters who examine, are sometimes equally unacquainted with such mysteries." \*

Christianity is a practical system of religion; and the business of a minister is to make his hearers practical christians. If he fail to do this, he may be learned in Latin, in law, in philosophy, in mathematics, &c. but he is not a learned *divine*. Suppose a medical gentleman were to deliver lectures on the healing art, in language the most pure and elegant; suppose you could collect from his lectures that he understood Latin, Greek, Arabic, &c. yet after all, if he could perform no cures, he would not be called a *learned physician*. Suppose another man could not lecture half so eloquently, and were perfectly ignorant of all languages except his mother-

\* Knox's Essays, No. 77.



tongue, if he were more successful in practice, he would justly be deemed the wisest doctor. The clergy have the *cure of souls*, just the same as physicians have the cure of bodies; and as the doctor who can heal no diseases must be an ignorant quack, so the minister who can convert no sinners must be an ignorant divine.

Let us then bring the subject to the proper test. No man can be properly qualified for the ministry, who is not successful in it; and his success is to be estimated by the moral influence of his discourses upon the hearts and lives of his auditors. There may be much fine writing in his sermon; it may be adorned with the most enchanting imagery, and every period may be well turned; there may be some very learned criticisms, and the whole may be delivered in a very gentleman-like style; but, after all, if no moral good be effected, the end of the ministry is not answered, and the preacher has only been taking much pains to demonstrate his own folly. His business is to make his hearers virtuous; and he betrays his ignorance when he loses sight of this, or when his sermons are not best adapted to promote it.

It is not even pretended, that zeal for the glory of God, and salvation of men, is the chief motive which actuates most young men who enter into holy orders in the establishment. A youth is sent to school, and afterwards to college, to prepare for the ministry; not because his mind is crucified to the

world, and wholly devoted to God;—not because he burns, with holy ardour, to lead his fellow-men, on the paths of piety and virtue, to eternal glory; but because there is a valuable living in the gift of the family, or he has a promise of the next presentation from some noble patron, or he is too simple to gain a livelihood in any other profession. In such a case it signifies nothing if his morals and disposition are both opposed to the ministry; he must qualify for it, and then engage in it. But how does he *qualify*? By studying the art of training up immortal souls for heaven! Such a thought never once enters into his head! No wonder, therefore, that he does no good. The young men among the dissenters selected for the ministry, are, generally, persons of good natural parts and undoubted piety; who engage in the sacred employment, not from necessity, but choice; their chief study is to save souls; in this art they soon become proficient; and hence their great success.

To talk about the years spent in preparation for the ministry, and the knowledge acquired in grammar, logic, rhetoric, dead languages, philosophy, and mathematics, is quite beside the point, if the preacher has not learned the art of making men holy, just, and good. Suppose a youth were to spend seven years in learning the art of shoemaking, and when he had done could not make a pair of shoes, would he not be taken for a blockhead? How amusing it would be to see this dunce put on all the airs of a learned crispin, and to hear him

dilate with professional consequence on his seven years studies. He heard of some Latin authors, who had written well upon the art ; he determined, therefore, to study Latin, that he might benefit by their labours. To qualify himself to take measure and cut out, he applied himself to geometry. Observing leather to be elastic, he studied philosophy to find out the cause of it ; at first he inclined to the Cartesian hypothesis, but, afterwards, saw reason to believe that the elastic force of the air is the principle of elasticity in all other bodies. If this man's parade of learning be ridiculous, because he cannot make a pair of shoes ; is it not equally silly to hear a minister boast of his literary acquirements, when he has not learned the only business belonging to his profession, which is to make men virtuous ?

In all other employments, he who does his work best is esteemed the most skilful workman ; and it is just as true that he who makes the best christians is the most learned divine. If a tinker convert more sinners from the error of their ways than a bishop, he is more learned, in spite of his dirty face and apron, than the episcopal gentleman with all his robes of sacerdotal importance. “ He that winneth souls is wise.”

# ESSAY V.

## ON MINISTERIAL QUALIFICATIONS.

---

WHEN a knowledge of christianity is said to be the only qualification absolutely necessary to a minister of the gospel, the proposition requires explanation. Virtue is as necessary as knowledge, but no wicked man can thoroughly understand the christian religion.

I. Virtue is necessary to a minister of the gospel. One great end of the institution of the ministerial office is to make men virtuous; and no instructions are of any value any further than as they tend to purify the heart and regulate the conduct. A mere knowledge of duty is not a sufficient inducement to men to practise it, or there would be no wilful sinners. Religion, therefore, must be enforced as well as explained. But no wicked man can press the motives of religion with sufficient earnestness: 1st, Because he does not feel their force upon his own mind: 2dly, Because conscious guilt

must paralyze his exertions: *3dly*, Because his own conduct must destroy their influence upon the minds of his auditors.

“ The carnal mind is enmity against God ; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” This is as true of the clergy as of the laity ; and hence, in the nature of things, a carnal priest cannot feel a disposition to convert sinners to piety and virtue ; on the contrary, he will do all in his power to prevent it. Our Lord complained of the wicked Jewish teachers, that they prevented those from entering the kingdom of heaven who were about to enter ; \* and the apostle lays it down as a principle, that he who is after the flesh will persecute him who is after the spirit ; † and that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. ‡ Ungodly priests have always betrayed as strong a disposition as any body of men whatever to persecute the righteous ; to suppose, therefore, that they will seriously endeavour to make others virtuous, is as foolish as to expect that Satan will cast out Satan. With them genuine piety is cried down as enthusiasm and fanaticism, and *strict* morality as preciseness and fleshly perfection.

There is an established order in the moral world as well as in the natural. The Almighty has no more appointed vice to propagate virtue, than he has appointed the frost of winter to produce vegetation. According to this established order, every

\* Matthew xxiii. 13.

† Gall. iv. 29.

‡ 2 Tim. iii, 12.



thing naturally generates its own kind. Vice begets vice: hence the scripture adage; "Like priest like people." The vices of a priest are very prolific; they produce some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. The iniquities of the Jewish nation are traced to its teachers, as their origin: "The leaders of my people have caused them to err."

God has expressly forbidden wicked men to teach religion. "Unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." \* Our Saviour has cautioned his followers against them:—"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. *Ye shall know them by their fruits.*" † "By their fruits," cannot be meant, as some have thought, their *doctrines*, but their *lives*. Figurative as the passage is, it indicates, with sufficient clearness, that the false teacher,—the wolf in sheep's clothing,—is a hypocrite; we cannot, however, infallibly infer the state of a man's mind from his preaching; if his doctrine be bad, he may sincerely believe it, in which case he is not guilty of hypocrisy. Besides, our Saviour goes on to describe the fate of these false prophets at the last day; and in this account their hypocrisy is not supposed to consist in a disagreement between their professions and doctrines, but between their professions and lives. "Not every one which *saith* unto me, Lord!

\* Psalm l. 16, 17.

† Matthew vii. 15, 16.

Lord ! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven." Their orthodoxy is not disputed ; they are allowed to plead, " Lord ! Lord ! have we not prophesied in thy name ? And in thy name have cast out devils ? And in thy name done many wonderful works ?" But the Judge will sternly reply, " I never knew you. Depart from me ye that *work iniquity*."

Wicked ministers must do infinite mischief. Hear the apostle's cutting expostulation with an immoral Jewish teacher : " Thou art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself ? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal ? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery ? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege ? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God ?" \* What was the effect of this man's preaching ? " For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." Such always has been, and always will be, the fruit of such a ministry.

The apostle Peter speaks to the same purpose. " But there were false prophets also among the

\* Romans ii. 19—24.

people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." By what marks shall the people know these false teachers, who murder souls and expose the truth of God to the ridicule and contempt of its enemies? "And through *covetousness* shall they, with *feigned words*, make merchandise of you." \* None but wicked men can enter the ministry from such a motive, and they can have no other.—But the business must be varnished over with "feigned words." Hence the covetous priest, instead of avowing that he is prompted by "filthy lucre," feigns himself "moved by the Holy Ghost;" and instead of informing the people that he is a spiritual merchant, he pretends to be a spiritual doctor:—his object is not to make *merchandise* of their souls, but to *cure* them. Those who credit these pretensions, "follow their pernicious ways," and perish; and those who discover the cheat, make christianity a party to it, and thus "the ways of truth are evil spoken of." What has a wicked priesthood done for France? It produced licentiousness of manners, and then infidelity; it generated those principles which ruined that country, and nearly all Europe; by defiling the altar, it destroyed the throne, and turned the land into a field of blood. When the consecrated profligates could profit by the mask no longer, they threw it off, and

\* 2 Peter ii. 1, 2, 5.

marched forward with brazen front to join the ranks of atheism.

It will perhaps be said that the vices of the priest cannot lessen the obligations of the people to practise morality; they must do as he says, and not as he does. Obligation is not the question. The authority of divine law is independent of human conduct. The question is,—Can a priest who defies the authority of God, persuade the people to respect it? Attend to this point. A priest returns home drunk from a public meeting on Saturday night, and preaches next morning from, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.” He is caught in bed with his neighbour’s wife, and takes for his text, the following Sabbath, “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” He is engaged in a law-suit with his parishioners about tithes, and preaches from,—“Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” Can any person be extravagant enough to believe that such a wretch can persuade the drunkard to become sober, the debauchee to become chaste, and the litigious to become peaceable? But he enforces his morality with the remark, “You must do as I say, and not as I do!” Well said! If Satan be capable of a blush, such a declaration could not fail to produce it. Only keep the profligate

gate in countenance, by your example, for six days out of the seven; and your grave lectures on the Sabbath will teach them to make a jest of religion; thus, by precept and example, you will make them impious and keep them vicious, and so complete the character and ensure the perdition of reprobates.

It is as necessary for a minister of religion to *reprove sin* as to give instruction concerning duty. But a wicked man can never do this with effect. He will seldom attempt it at all. The dreaded retort of, "Physician, heal thyself," will effectually deter those who retain any sense of shame; and the infamous character of the man whose conscience is seared, as with a hot iron, by a long course of daring impiety and immorality, will completely neutralize the severity of his censure.

The divine co-operation is necessary to the success of the christian ministry. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit. I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So, then, neither is he that planteth, any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. We, then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Will God employ and assist a wicked man in the work of converting sinners from the error of their ways? Before this question be answered, one



or two more must be considered: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" But,

II. No wicked man can fully understand the christian religion. It is a very common and just observation, that no man can attain to eminence in any profession who has not a taste for it. This observation is as applicable to a divine, as to a mechanic, a lawyer, or a physician. And no man can possibly have a taste for religion, who is in love with sin: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to his laws, neither indeed can be."

Worldly considerations will sometimes prompt a man to apply to a subject which is ungrateful to his feelings. A lad is put apprentice to a business which he dislikes, and his master compels him to pay some attention to it. When he sets up for himself, he soon becomes sensible that application is necessary to his subsistence; hence he does violence to his feelings, and endeavours to rise to mediocrity; but, except his disposition change, he never attains to distinction. The case of a vicious clergyman is different. During his apprenticeship at the university, he is under no obligation to study religion. By reading the Greek and Latin poets and historians, he may qualify himself to celebrate the mysteries of Bacchus and Venus; but other studies are requisite to prepare for the christian pulpit. A *living* may be obtained by being related to a patron, and

by playing off a political squib against jacobins, or a religious one against enthusiasts. The study of christianity is not necessary in order to a due discharge of clerical duties. The prayers are all ready for all occasions in the liturgy, and sets of fashionable discourses in the form of manuscript, are to be met with in every bookseller's shop. Thus the necessity of studying our holy religion is superseded; and, as nothing short of absolute necessity could induce a profligate young spark to apply his mind to it, he will *do duty*, as the cant phrase is, without, properly speaking, *knowing* his duty.

A mind virtuously disposed is an essential requisite to the perception of christian truth. Our Lord represents vice and ignorance, virtue and knowledge, as inseparably connected together: "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered. But he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. None of the wicked shall understand."\*

Divine illumination is necessary to a right understanding of the word of God. When David opened the sacred volume, he put up this prayer: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things

\* John, iii. 19, 20, 21. vii. 17. Daniel, xii. 10.

out of thy law.”\* Though the apostles enjoyed the privilege of hearing our Lord’s public discourses, and his explanations of many of them in private, yet they knew but little of the nature of his religion till after his resurrection, when it is observed, “then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”† The apostle Paul lays it down as a general truth, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”‡

The church of England is strictly orthodox upon this point. She prays:—“That it may please thee to illuminate all bishops, priests, and deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of thy word; and that, both by their preaching and living, they may set it forth, and shew it accordingly.” In the second part of the homily on the knowledge of holy scripture, a saying of Chrysostom is cited with approbation. “Chrysostom saith, that man’s human and worldly wisdom, or science, needeth not to the understanding of scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence do search therefor.” In the first part of the homily for Whitsunday, we are told that, “The Holy Ghost, because he doth instruct the hearts of the simple in the true knowledge of God and his word, is most justly termed by this name and title to be the spirit of truth. Eusebius, in his ecclesiastical history,

\* Psal'm cxix. 18.

† Luke xxiv. 45.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

telleth a strange story of a certain learned and-subtle philosopher, who, being an extreme adversary to Christ and his doctrine, could by no kind of learning be converted to the faith; but was able to withstand all the arguments that could be brought against him, with little or no labour. At length there started up a poor simple man of small wit and less knowledge, one that was reputed among the learned as an idiot; and he, in God's name, would needs take in hand to dispute with this proud philosopher. The bishops and other learned men standing by, were marvellously abashed at the matter, thinking that by his doings they should be all confounded and put to open shame. He notwithstanding goeth on, and beginning in the name of the Lord Jesus, brought the philosopher to such point in the end, contrary to all men's expectation, that he could not chuse but acknowledge the power of God in his words, and to give place to the truth. Was not this a miraculous work, that one silly soul, of no learning, should do that which many bishops of great knowledge and understanding were never able to bring to pass?" After what has been said upon the subject, it is not necessary to prove here, that God will not grant his holy illumination to an unholy priest; this has been proved repeatedly; and the inference is, that no wicked man can understand the scriptures.

With the above explanation, which provides against the licentiousness of the pulpit, it may safely and confidently be affirmed, that he who understande

christianity has a right, and is bound in duty, to teach it. Let a christian man then preach the same truths to others, which, through the blessing of God, enlightened his own mind and reformed his life; he will soon witness their efficacy in the conversion of sinners, and this success of his labours will be sufficient proof that God has called him to the sacred work. The apostle Paul proved to the Corinthians, and to all men, from the success of his ministry solely, without any written credentials, that he had authority from Christ to preach the gospel: "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men. Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."\* This reasoning will be equally conclusive in favour of any minister who can give proofs of usefulness; for if any man can convert sinners without the approbation and co-operation of God, the apostle's argument is good for nothing. In comparison of these living epistles, the apostle despised the written recommendation or orders, on which, it seems, the false teacher at Corinth set a high value. How many modern divines make a parade of *holy orders*, written with pen and ink, who can shew no living epistles, written with the Spirit of the living God. The various denomina-

\* 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2, 5.



tions of dissenting ministers have reformed tens of thousands of profligates; and these evidences of their success must carry conviction to every ingenuous mind, that their ministry is of God. Those who traduce their character, and depreciate their labours, cannot stand a comparison with them in point of either morals or usefulness.

It is supposed by many people, that all are not authorised to preach by the great head of the church, who are sufficiently qualified for the work by their piety and abilities. A select number, it is said, are specially designated to the holy employment by the Almighty, and solemnly set apart to it by the church; these alone have, what is termed, *a call to the ministry*. All the rest are supposed to be excluded; and, therefore, should any of them, no matter how well qualified in other respects, presume to assume the sacred office, they are to be considered as sacrilegious intruders, who must answer for their temerity at the peril of their souls. As this is an error of considerable magnitude, it will be proper to take some pains to explode it.

*A call to preach* is variously explained by the different sects. A churchman who is a candidate for deacons' orders, professes to *feel* inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost. What the clergy mean by this declaration it is difficult to say, as they, almost to a man, denounce all *feelings* and *impulses* of the Holy Ghost as enthusiasm and fanaticism. How they can *feel* without *feeling*, and be *moved* without an *impulse*,

will require some little ingenuity to explain. Till this be done, they can only evade the charge of enthusiasm and fanaticism at the expence of their honesty. Nelson has a remark similar to the well known one of Burnet upon this subject: "When a priest," says he, "enters into orders, only to entitle himself to a benefice, without any *inward call* from the Holy Ghost, if this is the case, (as I am afraid it too frequently happens) then he speaks false in the presence of God, even upon the most solemn occasion, and this must be a sham dedication of himself to his service, and it is very improbable, that the God of truth should give any blessing to the services or ministry of such a person, who leaped into the church by a wilful and premeditated lie." \*

Every pious man is under a divine influence; but no one has any reason to expect any other motion to the office of the ministry than to any other christian duty. It is the duty of every man to do all the good in his power. It is a good work to instruct the ignorant; it is my duty, therefore, if I understand religion, to instruct those who do not. The obligation to teach, in this case, does not arise from the state of my feelings, but from my qualifications; suppose my feelings, instead of prompting me to the employment, were ever so much opposed to it, it is still my duty to mount the rostrum; and the sense of duty ought to prompt me to action. It is the sense of duty which must give the impulse, and not the impulse the sense of duty, otherwise, by making our

\* Rights of the clergy, page 408.

feelings the rule of our duty, we renounce the authority of the written word, and are lost in the wilds of fanaticism or the gloom of infidelity,—perhaps both.

What shocking work this doctrine of motions, being a rule of action, would produce, if it were applied to morals. An object of distress solicits my charity: I have plenty of money, but I am covetous; I therefore feel no motion to part with it, and am, consequently, under no obligation to relieve the indigent.—Again, because I love money, it is ten to one but I feel an impulse to take a few pounds out of my neighbour's desk; my motion makes it a duty, and I should feel a guilty conscience were I to withhold my hand.

You will perhaps object, and say, “But these things are sinful, and therefore you ought not to regard your impulses.” I deny it. Impulse is my rule of action, and my impulse does not say that these things are sinful. “True,” you will reply, “but the word of God does.” Certainly. “By the *law*, (not impulse) is the knowledge of sin,” as well as duty. Here then, we have got to the point. If the word of God informs me what I am to avoid, and what I am to do, an impulse, or the absence of it, can neither add to my obligation nor diminish from it. It is my duty to relieve the poor, and if my feelings are against it, I must be charitable in spite of them. It is my duty to be honest, and I must suppress my feelings if they would make me a rogue. So, in preaching:—If I am qualified to

instruct the ignorant, it is my duty to do it; and if my feelings are opposed to it, I must silence them with the awful consideration:—"Woe be unto me if I preach not the gospel."

But you will say, "It is not all impulses which are to be followed, but those only which are excited *by the Holy Ghost*." Very well: But how shall I know that a particular motion is excited by the Holy Ghost? If you say, "When the Holy Ghost prompts a man to preach, he accompanies the motion with an inward and distinct consciousness of his agency." I answer, If this be true, by making the spirit's influence the rule of action, you render the word of God of no use, for one infallible director is as good as a thousand; and we have again arrived at fanaticism and infidelity. If revelation is to be our guide, the sense of duty must give the impulse to action.

A man who understands religion, and perceives it to be his duty to teach it, may have his conviction of duty powerfully impressed upon his mind by the Holy Spirit; just the same as by a divine influence he is persuaded to practise the duties of honesty and charity. The scriptures teach that "It is God who worketh in us to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure;" and in perfect unison with these sentiments is the declaration of the church of England, that all *holy desires*, and all *just works*, proceed from our heavenly Father. But it is not the impression of the Spirit of God which confers the right, or creates

the duty to preach, any more than it confers the right or creates the duty to be just and merciful; the authority and obligation must, in the nature of things, be antecedent to the impression.

What has led to so much nonsense about a *call* to the ministry, has been the generally received opinion, that priests are a distinct order of men, specially designated by heaven to their holy employment, and solemnly set apart to it by a junta of the sacred profession, with a number of pompous rites and ceremonies. Now, suppose a layman to be ever so well qualified to give religious instruction,—to be even wiser and better than the parish priest,—it is taken for granted, that he cannot have the *inward call*; if he pretends to have received it, he is called an enthusiast; and if he presumes to hold forth, he is denounced as unauthorised and unaccredited,—an usurper of the sacred office, whose ministrations must be accompanied with a curse rather than a blessing. Were the right and duty to teach christianity founded upon a man's *ability* for the work, which is the only proper basis, a corporation of priests could no longer claim an exclusive privilege to make ministers and to preach the gospel.

According to church logic, there is not an individual receives the *inward call*, or *motion*, besides those who actually receive ordination; nor a single ordained person who has not received the inward call. For if more were designated to the office by the Almighty, than are actually put into it by the bishops,



these supernumeraries would have a right to preach independent of episcopal authority, (and this would spoil all,) unless their lordships conceive they possess a power to annul the appointments of the Supreme Being; and this would be to suppose their authority superior to his. And were they to ordain one whom God has not called to the work, the people could derive no benefit from his ministrations, and would, of course, be justified in looking out for help from some other quarter. This then is the conclusion we must come to, that God has subjected himself in this business to the will of bishops; if they appoint any or none to the ministry, and if those they may appoint be good, bad, or indifferent, he is perfectly satisfied,—at least, no doubt they believe so; but who else can?

It is a favourite sentiment with many, that God does not give an inward call without an outward call; and that this outward call is from the church. But what church? The English church says one, the calvinist church says another, the baptist church says a third, &c. That every church has a right to chuse its own ministers, I am not going to dispute; this right is founded in nature. But I ask, Is it not a duty in christians to *propagate* their religion? I have half a score ignorant and wicked neighbours. I am a christian, and love my neighbours as myself. I could instruct and warn them, and perhaps persuade them to embrace christianity. You will go to hell yourself, says one, if you preach to them that they are in any danger of going there. Why?

Why! because you are not episcopally ordained. Will the bishop ordain me? No, not unless you know the languages. Stuff! I am not going to preach to these profligates in either Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, but in plain English. Thus, for want of an *outward call*, I must not dare to talk to my neighbours about their souls! Where is common sense?

What church gave the apostles a *call*? or *sent them out* to preach? And where do the scriptures say a single word about an *outward call*? We read in the New Testament, of a man who propagated christianity by working miracles in the name of Christ, and who had received no human appointment to the sacred office. The apostles attempted to silence this man:—"We forbid him." And why, gentlemen, did you forbid him? Because he was ignorant, or wicked? No;—but for this wonderful reason, "because he followed not us." That is, in modern cant, "because he would not submit to the constituted authorities. Because he was *unauthorised* and *unaccredited*,—an *intruder* into the sacred office, *self-appointed*, a *dangerous schismatic*, who *seceded from the most pure and apostolic church in Christendom*." The disciples reported the case to their master, expecting, no doubt, his warmest approbation of their conduct. Now, what did our Saviour do on this occasion? Did he deliver a long harangue on the necessity of *unity*, the unlawfulness of *assuming* the ministerial office, the sin and danger of schism? Did he proceed to curse this *first dis-*

*senting minister* with bell book and candle, in the name of the holy trinity? So far from it, the amiable Jesus approved and justified his conduct, and severely censured their rashness and folly. He said, “ forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me; for he that is not against us, is on our part.” \*

Frumentius, a layman, introduced christianity into Abyssinia, and baptized the king and his principal courtiers. It is true this apostle was afterwards ordained a bishop, by the orthodox Athanasius, but he ought rather to have been burnt as a damnable heretic, if intrusion into the sacred office be a sin of the first magnitude. The gospel was introduced into Georgia, a province of Asia, by a *female slave*. By the number of her miracles, and the sanctity of her manners, she converted the king and queen, who destroyed their idols and embraced the faith. His majesty, before his baptism, preached to, and converted his subjects, and thus became the apostle of his country before he himself was *initiated*.† Now, would it have been better for these nations to have remained in idolatry, than thus to be converted by self-appointed teachers? “ I have no scruple,” affirms a mitred bigot, “ in saying that it were better it should, than that a person should be employed, of whose fitness we have no

\* Mark ix. 38, 39, 40.

† Mosheim. cent. 4. part i. chap. i. sect. xx. Burnet's Exposit, Art. 23.

means of judging." Supposing there even were an irregularity in these cases, (though I cannot perceive it,) it were surely better that people should go irregularly to heaven, than *decently and in order* to hell.

Let us then return again to the point. It is the duty of every man to do all the good he can. If I meet with a man more ignorant than myself, it is my duty, if he be willing to hear me, to give him instruction. Suppose I have several neighbours who are willing to hear me; instead of visiting them from house to house, which I have not time to do, I desire them to meet me at an appointed time and place, and instead of the trouble of many lectures in private, I deliver one discourse to them all in public; and, O wonderful! without either a bishop's hands, or a priest's gown, I am turned parson! and while presumptuous mortals are exclaiming, *disorder!* the harmony of heaven is improved by the joy of angels over these converted sinners!

Upon the principle here laid down, a man may have a call to preach to one congregation and not to another; because the one may be more ignorant, and the other wiser than the teacher. The Methodists act upon this plan. By a judicious distribution of talent, the abilities of all are brought into useful operation. They send preachers of inferior parts into the villages, to teach the ignorant the first rudiments of christianity, for which service they are sufficiently qualified. The congregations of a supe-

rior class are served by men distinguished for their learning and pulpit eloquence.

Objection,—“ This scheme, of permitting every man to preach who fancies himself qualified by his piety and knowledge, would breed endless confusion and schism.” It would occasion no confusion. No man can preach to a society of christians without the consent of that society. A person believes himself qualified to preach and makes a tender of his services to a church. The church does not approve of him, and he goes out into the world. If any chuse to hear him, they may do so without confusion, and if he cannot get a congregation, he must either preach to empty pews, or sit down and be quiet ; but in either case he breeds no disturbance.

The case of schism must be considered more at large. Schism is sometimes a sin, and sometimes a virtue. In John vii. 43, the word is used to denote a difference of opinion among the multitude concerning Christ : “ There was a *schism* among the people because of him.” By comparing the preceding verses, it appears that our Lord gained over many of the people by his doctrine. This change in their sentiments produced a schism in his favour. It should seem from the next verse, that these schismatics protected him from the rage of his enemies ; “ for some of them would have taken him, but no man laid hands on him.” By opening the eyes of the blind, our Lord produced another schism. “ Therefore, said some of the Pharisees,” this man



is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day. Others said, how can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a *schism* among them." John ix. 16. Now, who were the sinners in this case? Those who held fast their old prejudices against Jesus? Or the schismatics, who looked upon him as a good man? In both the above instances, the schismatics deserve praise; in the former, they protected our Saviour from personal injury; and, in the latter, they defended the innocence of his conduct.

The only places in the New Testament where *church* schisms are mentioned, are the following: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no *schisms* among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be *schisms* among you, and I partly believe it. That there should be no *schism* in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another." \* The schism, in the first text, refers to their foolish partialities and antipathies respecting their preachers. One said, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos, &c. The apostle blames them all equally; and this is not a solitary instance of a whole church being divided into factions *in itself*, and all the factions being sinful schismatics. In the second passage, the schism took place when they were *come together in the*

\* 1 Cor. i. 10, xi. 18. xii. 25.

*church.* It is pretty evident, from the following verses, that the Corinthians took a social supper of their own in the church, previous to the celebration of the Eucharist. On these occasions, according to the custom of the Greeks, every one brought his own provisions to the meeting. The rich brethren made a pompous display of their luxuries, while the poor, who were ashamed of their ordinary and scanty fare, divided from them and retired into a corner to eat their morsel alone. Thus, as the apostle complains, one was drunken, and another hungry. The rich are blamed by the apostle for *causing* the schism, and the poor who *made* it are pitied. In the last text the schism guarded against, was a difference of opinion on the value and importance of spiritual gifts. The apostle compares these gifts to the members of the body, and shews, that as each member is necessary to the man, so each gift is necessary to the church; and that, since the feeblest and least honourable parts of the body contribute to the welfare of the whole, and on that account are prized and carefully preserved from injury, so the weakest gifts contribute to the perfection of the church, and are therefore entitled to the attention and esteem of all believers.

The above remarks will serve to correct two mistakes: 1st, It is generally supposed, that schism is a separation *from* a church, whereas, in the above instances, it is represented as a division *in* a church. The christians at Corinth, are not charged with forming several churches or societies in opposition

to each other, nor are they cautioned against any such thing; they are merely reproved for, and warned against *creating dissension in the church*. 2dly, Schism is generally spoken of under the notion of a damnable sin; whereas, in the texts under consideration, it does not appear to be marked by any character of peculiar aggravation. Attend for a moment longer to the three texts: In the *first*, the sin lay in over-rating the abilities of some preachers, and thinking meanly of the gifts of others. Is this a damnable sin? In the *second*, the poor were the schismatics, who were not blamed at all. In the *third*, the evil guarded against is a depreciation of the value of inferior spiritual gifts; but the Corinthians are not warned against this error by threatening them with the terrors of eternal damnation.

Making a schism, however, is seldom a virtue, because when the schismatics happen to be right in their opinions, they often defend them by an unjustifiable warmth of temper; and no opinion is of sufficient importance to excuse indulgence in the bad passions. The worst of schismatics are they who magnify petty differences into matters of the utmost consequence, and who make them terms of communion, and necessary to salvation.

Objection.—“Allowing every person to preach who conceives himself qualified, has been the cause of our being divided into innumerable sects and parties, and this surely is a great evil, which is forbidden in sacred scripture.” Where is it forbidden in scripture?

Shew me chapter and verse. If the church of Christ was to consist of one sect only, to the end of the world, which is that sect? It cannot be the church of England, for its constitution is only a few centuries old. It is said by its advocates to have been formed on the model of the primitive church, as it existed for the four first centuries. Admitting this to be true, for the sake of argument, it is not pretended that any church since the fourth century, has had a similar constitution. Now, then, where was the church of Christ from the fourth century to the reformation? What church made our thirty nine articles the standard of its faith, and used our liturgy as its only manual of devotion? Let the true church be found where it will, if you cannot find our articles and prayer-book in it, the church of England is a dissenter from it; and, therefore, according to the objection, is not a church of Christ.—Is the church of Rome that sect? It is not pretended by the papists that the church of Rome is the same now, that it was when first constituted by an apostle; for they freely admit, that councils have added to it innumerable articles of faith, and rites and ceremonies of worship.

Both parties endeavour to justify the additions they have made, by pretending, that “the church has a power to decree rights and ceremonies, and authority in matters of faith.” As no one pretends that the church of Rome was not once a true church, by allowing her *then* to possess the power pleaded for, you cannot deny her to be a true church

still. Admit this authority, and she will justify all her abominations. It must be evident at once, that such a power ought only to be lodged in infallible hands: for if you suppose those who possess it liable to err, they may soon, by virtue of it, turn the church of Christ into a synagogue of Satan. Upon this point the catholics are consistent. The church of England, by admitting this power, cannot possibly justify her separation from Rome; and by claiming this power herself, without asserting infallibility, she is guilty of the grossest folly.

Let us come then to the point. All parties agree that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church. The objection supposes the church of Christ to consist of one sect, the individuals composing which all agree in the same articles of faith, the same formularies of worship, and the same rules of discipline; and that this sect has existed since the days of the apostles. It has been shewn, that the church of Rome cannot be that sect, unless you admit her plea to the divine attribute of infallibility: and the fallacy of this pretension, has been so often exposed, that it is quite unnecessary to dwell upon it here: The church of England cannot be that sect, because it has existed only for a few centuries; and I will defy any man to prove that such a sect is in existence. The church of Christ does not consist of any one sect exclusively, but of the virtuous among all sects.

The apostles of Christ had no idea of uniformity in the constitution of Christian churches. They



made no other creed than the scriptures. No person now is so ignorant as to believe, that what is called, "The Apostles' Creed," was composed by them. They made no liturgy to be used in public worship, but left every church to manage this important business as well as it could. What is said to prove that they composed forms of prayer, by inspiration, for the use of the church, does not deserve serious consideration. If they made a prayer-book, how happened it that it was not preserved as well as their other writings? They had no uniform plan of discipline. The apostles themselves, and Timothy and Titus, who were all itinerant preachers, executed discipline in the churches they founded and visited, during their stay. In their absence this power was exercised by the presbyters; and where there were no presbyters, as at Corinth, the people did this business themselves. Presbyters were sometimes appointed by apostles, or evangelists; and sometimes, with the consent of the people, they were self-appointed. These things have been proved at large in the Essay on Ordination. Here then was as great a difference between many apostolic churches, as there is in the present day between many sects and parties. This diversity of the primitive churches is perfectly inconsistent with our modern ridiculous notions about uniformity.

It has been remarked already that our Lord excused the man who refused to join with the apostles, and to submit to their authority, which he surely would not have done had it been unlawful to refuse

subjection to an holy apostolic church. Jesus said to these apostolic silencers, “ forbid him not ;” let him go on casting out devils and making converts in his own way. When Paul was at the head of the church of Rome, there was another sect in the city which was opposed to his. Instead, however, of abusing them as schismatics and heretics, he rejoiced in the success of their labours, though they thought to add affliction to his bonds. Phil. i. 16, 17, 18. Many will be of opinion that the apostle Paul was the only infallible head the church of Rome ever had, and he denounced no curses against the separatists ; so that, if the popes are not even more infallible than he was, they ought to wish success to all denominations of christians. If Paul sends no spiritual thunder against those who divide from an apostolic church, the anathemas of priests and bishops must be perfectly harmless.

After creed-making came into fashion, the articles were very few for some time ; but after the council of Nice they gradually swelled into volumes. For several centuries, each bishop made a creed and liturgy for the use of his own church. This is proved at large by Bingham, who observes,—“ That every bishop had at first the power and privilege to compose and order the form of divine service for his own church, I have shewed in another place, where I had occasion to discourse of the independency of bishops, and their absolute power in their own church. Where among other things I observed, that as they had the privilege *to word their own*

*creeds*, so they had the privilege to *frame their own liturgy*; which privilege they retained for several ages; as may be confirmed by this farther and most certain observation,—that when any new episcopal church was taken and erected out of another, the new-erected church was not obliged to follow the model and prescriptions of the old church, but might frame to herself a form of divine service agreeable to her own circumstances and condition.”\*

Add to this, what no one at all acquainted with ecclesiastical history will dispute, that in the primitive times the people chose their own bishops; and it will appear very evident, that both people and pastors, in those times, enjoyed much greater liberty than the members of most modern national establishments. It is true that when a minister preached any doctrine which was supposed to be novel and dangerous, he was called to account before a synod or a council, and if his heresy was judged by the majority to be damnable, he was excommunicated; but if he agreed in *substance* with his brethren, nothing more was required.

From the above it is easy to see, that there was nearly, if not quite as great a diversity of creeds and prayers used in the churches of the orthodox in primitive times, as is to be found among the dissenters of the present day. Were the church of England really, as she is in pretence, constituted on the plan of the primitive churches;—were the people allowed to elect their own pastors; and were the

\* Bingham's *Antiquities*, book xiii. chap. v. section 8

pastors required to subscribe to no other articles than what are generally believed to comprise the essentials of christianity, and left at liberty in other respects to use their own creeds, prayers, rites, and ceremonies,—nearly all the dissenters in the kingdom would conform to the establishment.

Those who deem conformity to an established church a matter of importance, must surely be convinced that its terms of communion ought to be as moderate and easy as possible. There never was a church which carried uniformity so far, and which, therefore, made conformity so difficult to a conscientious mind, as the church of England. Its ministers are not permitted to use a single ceremony or prayer but what is prescribed by the liturgy; and they are required to signify their unfeigned assent and consent to every thing contained in it. The only liberty allowed is in preaching; and it is astonishing that churchmen, in their zeal for uniformity, did not get an act of parliament to banish all sermons from the pulpit, except the homilies; for it must be as dangerous to permit a clergyman to use his own composition in the pulpit as in the reading desk. Even the pope permits different forms of prayer to be used in different places; and both Pius IV, and Gregory XIII, offered to queen Elizabeth to confirm the English liturgy.\*

If dissent from the established church be a damnable sin, nothing should be a term of communion in it

\* De Laune's Plea for the Noncon. pages 59, 60.

that is not necessary to salvation. For admitting every thing in the church to be scriptural, all men are not capable of perceiving every religious truth; and if some men are kept out of the church in consequence of their scruples about matters of minor importance, churchmen are guilty of sending such men to hell for trifles. But the clergy carry matters still farther. They suppose they have authority to enjoin things which, in their own nature, are indifferent, and have, accordingly, imposed a great number of this description. All who are kept out of the church by a doubt whether our spiritual lords can alter the nature of things, by making that important which of itself is indifferent, are sent to the devil out of mere wantonness. “If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.”

But imposing indifferent things, it seems, was not sufficient; our subscription is required to contradictions. We must subscribe to general redemption in the communion service, and to predestination in the 17th article. We must affirm, with the office for confirmation, that the laying on of the bishops' hands is a *sign* of God's gracious goodness towards us, and, with the 25th article, that “confirmation has not any *visible sign*, or ceremony ordained of God;” *i. e.* that the bishops' hands are *invisible* at the time of confirmation. But this difficulty, with many others, may be got over by shutting our eyes; for then the laying on of hands, and all absurdities,



will be literally invisible. We must believe two creeds, one of which curses all who deny the Son to be of the *same* hypostasis with the Father, though the other declares that they shall without doubt perish everlastingly, who do not hold that there is *one* hypostasis of the Father and *another* of the Son. If we believe either of these creeds, we are cursed by the other; if we believe both of them, we are *doubly* cursed, *i. e.* by each of them for believing the other; and, if we believe neither of them, we are *trebly* cursed, *i. e.* by the two creeds, and the church which has imposed them. The church of England was never, perhaps, more justly characterized, than by the late Lord Chatham, when he said in the house of Peers, “ We, my Lords, have a Calvinistic creed, a Popish liturgy, and an Arminian clergy.”

Strict as the church is with respect to the oaths and subscriptions she exacts from her ministers, it is a fact that there is as great a diversity of opinions among the clergy as among the dissenters. In the church are to be found Calvinists and Arminians, Arians and Socinians, New-Jerusalemites, &c. &c. &c. The contentions between the *rational* and *evangelical* clergy are much more fierce than any that are witnessed between the different denominations of dissenters. In proportion to the strictness of the terms of communion in an established church, will be the depravity of its ministers. The reason is plain. Many conscientious men will be kept out by their scruples; but the large emoluments attached to a state religion will operate as an irresistible tempta-

tion to the unprincipled. Hypocrites, whose godliness is gain, will, without hesitation, signify their unfeigned assent and consent to every thing that may be exacted. Hence it is, that the most rigorously constituted establishments will always contain the largest proportion of hypocritical, profligate, and heretical clergy.

These observations will receive a practical illustration, by a reference to the period when our church was settled upon its present plan. According to the act of uniformity, all who did not subscribe their unfeigned assent and consent, to all and every particular contained in the prayer-book, by August 24th, 1662, were to be deprived of their ecclesiastical benefices. When the day arrived, very few copies were printed off, and *thousands* of the clergy subscribed more fully to a book *they had never seen*, than any conscientious man could do even to the bible. About two thousand worthies, whose religion consisted in something else than loaves and fishes, nobly refused to set their hands to this monument of the wisdom and piety of Charles' bishops, and were in consequence turned out of their livings; the rest demonstrated by their conduct, that they were ready to subscribe to the Koran, or any thing else, for a piece of bread.

From the great difference in men's education, opportunities, and intellect, it is unreasonable to expect that all men will see alike in all the minor points of religion; and therefore, no friend to chris-

tian charity and peace, will make a number of unmeaning and unimportant articles and ceremonies, terms of communion. There is as much difference in the size of men's souls as bodies, and as much difference in their taste about religious ceremonies as their dress. What would be thought of the legislature which should enact, that all the members of the political society should be of the same size, shape, complexion, and features, and should all wear clothing of the same sort, colour, quality and make? Yet this would be as wise as the attempt to establish uniformity of religion by law. There never were two men who believed exactly alike upon all religious subjects. Suppose they subscribe to the same doctrine, they will explain it differently. For instance, several men subscribe to the doctrine of atonement: one believes that Christ actually suffered all that the human race had merited of the wrath of God; another limits his sufferings to a select number; a third supposes there is virtue enough in his death to atone for devils, though devils have no interest in it; a fourth believes that devils *may* be saved through his death; and a fifth that they actually will. Some suppose that God made some abatement to Christ from the quantum of suffering which was due to our sins, on account of the dignity of his person; while others hold that no abatement was made, but being sustained by the Godhead he survived that stroke of divine wrath, which was sufficient to crush the human race for ever. One believes that the pardon of sin, promised through the atonement, is conditional; another, that it is

unconditional. Some hold, that the pardon is only sins that are past, others extend it to sins to come; some say we are forgiven at the time of believing, others that we were forgiven from all eternity, &c. &c. &c.

Uniformity is unnatural. There never were two men, whose persons, tempers, or dispositions were exactly alike. Animals, vegetables, and, in short, all the productions of nature, differ one from another; so that it is doubtful whether, since the creation, the world has produced two blades of grass exactly similar to each other. If uniformity were attained, it would not exist a moment, because every substance in nature is continually undergoing some change. Our bodies are not two moments the same; some matter is continually going off by insensible perspiration. The same observation applies to all animals. The whole face of nature is perpetually changing. These two characteristics of all natural productions, —an infinite variety and perpetual change,—are destructive of all uniformity. The deceptious appearances of uniformity are disgusting. The mind becomes weary with being employed for a length of time upon any one subject; hence the necessity of relaxation, and the pleasure derived from the contemplation of new objects. It is owing to this disposition of mind, that we admire the grandeur and glory of God as displayed in the infinite diversity and continual revolutions of his works. And it is owing to the same disposition of mind, that we are fatigued with sameness, and gratified with variety in religion.

Nothing has contributed more to that general indifference to the national religion, which is so feelingly deplored by many of its adherents, than a want of variety : it is over and over and over again, the same minister, the same tone of voice, the same creeds and prayers, and an annual return of the same sermons.

Let it not be supposed, however, that the diversity here pleaded for in religious matters is a diversity of error. Two creeds may differ in their phraseology, and yet agree in substance. How many of our religious disputes have turned out at last, after the contending parties have mutually explained themselves, to be merely disputes about *words* and not *things*. And as two persons may hold the same truth, but, by wording it differently, may misunderstand each other ; so the same form of words may convey truth to one mind and error to another. Though the clergy all subscribe to the same words, they do not all understand them in the same sense. One says, the church of England is decidedly Calvinistic ; another, that she is Arminian ; and a third, that she is neither exclusively, but opens her arms to embrace both ; only one of them, if any, can possibly be right. So liturgies may be differently worded, and yet each contain a service which, when used by devout minds, will be acceptable to God ; and the extempore effusions of others may not be less agreeable ; but an undevout mind will spoil the best form in the world. Most sects hold the essentials of christianity ; no one creed contains every truth. The subordinate truths are divided among



them; each probably contains a few which are not to be found in any of the others, and it is doubtful whether every truth be contained in the whole of them.

Admitting there are some errors in each of the sects, the cure is not to be found in acts of uniformity; for suppose the established religion to be as true as the bible, it is equally liable to be misunderstood, so that there will always be as great a diversity of religious opinions in an establishment as out of it.

The best way to banish error out of the religious world, is to let the pulpit be open to all. Upon this plan every religious opinion will be fully discussed; and as truth will shine out with a clearness and lustre which no abilities can give to error, she will finally illuminate the world. Thus it is in politics. Before any measure is publicly canvassed, there is generally a great diversity of opinion upon it; but after it has been fully and freely discussed by the splendid abilities of our senators, the nation at large, except a few interested individuals and their partizans, generally agree in one sentiment.

This plan, also, would afford the best security against the *introduction* of heresy. In places where the ministry is restricted to a distinct order of men, as in catholic countries, there we witness the reign of ignorance and error. The reason is,—the people are not permitted to think and judge for themselves;

they therefore quietly fall asleep in the arms of the clergy, and content themselves with believing as the church believes; they believe every thing, and know nothing. In this state of mind they are prepared to receive every absurdity which the clergy can invent for the benefit of their craft. It is in this way our Lord accounts for the introduction of heresy. "While men slept," says he, "the enemy sowed his tares."

The greater part of the noble army of martyrs, whose heroism is celebrated in our synagogues every sabbath day, were persecuted to death for preaching Christ in opposition to the authority of the church. Our holding up these worthies to general admiration shews that we approve of an independent spirit in our ancestors; and when we condemn this in the moderns, we are only acting over again the farce of the Jews, who, in the days of our Lord, built the sepulchres of the ancient prophets, and murdered their contemporaries.

The matters of principal moment are, to have a heavenly temper and disposition of mind, to act under the influence of pure principles and motives, and to regulate the conduct by the divine precepts. An agreement in these points is the only scripture rule of unity and uniformity. A parrot may be taught to repeat a creed, and a monkey to perform the ceremonies of worship; and these animals might be made saints in comparison of many reputed orthodox christians. Men in general have always

betrayed a propensity to lay more stress upon articles of faith and rites of devotion, than upon purity of heart and rectitude of conduct. If a man only adopt the popular creed, and perform the prescribed ceremonies, he may be a blasphemer, a drunkard, a sabbath-breaker, an adulterer, &c. and there is little the matter; the wholesome and godly discipline of the church is scarcely ever employed in the correction of these venial faults; but should the same man attend the conventicle and reform his life, he is immediately an arch-heretic, a damnable schismatic, a wild enthusiast; his religion is hypocrisy, his morality preciseness, and his end destruction. “Come to church and obey the laws, and be a dissembler, be a hypocrite, or a devil if thou wilt.” Such was the godly counsel of a pious and venerable reformer to a scrupulous puritan. See Neal, vol. i. chap. viii.

FINIS.

# Review,

BY A CHURCHMAN.

---

OF all the works which have come under our notice, we do not recollect one equal to this for ignorance and presumption. Mr Isaac sets himself to work to prove, that there has not been an uninterrupted succession of bishops, that ordination of ministers is a ceremony destitute of scripture authority, and of no importance, that the pretence of bishops to give the Holy Ghost in ordination is mere farce, that learning is of no value to a clergyman, and that the only qualifications for the ministry, of any consequence, are the enthusiasm and fanaticism of methodism.

To those of our readers who wish to see all the absurdities and heresies of the sectaries, embodied in a small publication, we can cordially recommend this volume. What judge Jeffries said, with perhaps too much warmth, of the works of Mr Baxter, may be soberly affirmed of these pages,—that “they are as full of poison as an egg’s full of meat.”

After the many masterly defences of our excellent establishment which have of late years issued from the press, it is perfectly unnecessary for us to enter the lists with this puny antagonist. We are very much deceived if there be not generally diffused among our countrymen, too much intelligence to permit them to be seduced by this incoherent rhapsody; and we suspect, that when Mr Isaac comes to settle with his bookseller, his book-making fever will abate;—there is no danger of his insulting a second time the good sense of the public.

Hitherto the sectaries have spoken with some degree of modesty, when they have expressed the reasons of their dissent from the national church; but this writer is the most vain and coxcombical scribbler we have ever seen. The greatest champions of our celestial hierarchy, whose piety and abilities have been uniformly respected, and sometimes even panegyricized by its greatest enemies, are treated by this important personage, with the lordly air of a village pedagogue correcting his refractory school-boys. The reading of this book has convinced us more than ever, of the necessity of repressing these fanatics by some legislative enactment; for, if this insolence is to be tolerated, we will venture to predict, without pretending to methodistical inspiration, that the time is not far distant, “when the church of England shall be no more.”



[N. B. The author thinks the above critique will very well suit the Monthly, Critical, Anti-jacobin, Edinburgh, Quarterly, and British Reviews. He begs leave to assure the editors, that they are at perfect liberty to insert it in their respective publications, on the condition of paying him half a guinea each, which he presumes to think, is a very moderate price for an article so orthodox, and so elegantly written.]

## ERRATA.

Page	9	line 18	for <i>methodism</i> , read <i>methodisms</i> .
—	20	— 24	for <i>a point</i> , read <i>the point</i> .
—	65	— 25	for <i>Swedenborgians</i> , read <i>Swedenburgians</i> .
—	86	— 4	delete <i>and</i> .

# CONTENTS.

---

	Page.
ESSAY I.	
<i>On the Uninterrupted Succession.</i> . . . . .	29
ESSAY II.	
<i>On Ordination.</i> . . . . .	80
ESSAY III.	
<i>On the Spiritual Gifts and Powers of the Clergy.</i>	147
SECTION I. <i>On the Gift of the Holy Ghost in</i> <i>Ordination.</i> . . . . .	148
SECTION II. <i>On Confirmation.</i> . . . . .	161
SECTION III. <i>On Baptism.</i> . . . . .	167
SECTION IV. <i>On the Lord's Supper.</i> . . . . .	170
SECTION V. <i>On Absolution.</i> . . . . .	172
SECTION VI. <i>On the Burial Service.</i> . . . . .	179
ESSAY IV.	
<i>On Learning.</i> . . . . .	185
ESSAY V.	
<i>On Ministerial Qualifications.</i> . . . . .	243





















